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S. FRANCIS DE SALES

Of the Love of God

HALF-A-CROWN EDITIONS

OF

DEVOTIONAL WORKS

EDITED BY H. L. SIDNEY LEAR.

**The Spiritual Letters of Archbishop Fénelon.—
Letters to Men.**

**The Spiritual Letters of Archbishop Fénelon.—
Letters to Women.**

The Spiritual Letters of S. Francis de Sales.

The Spirit of S. Francis de Sales.

Of the Love of God. By S. Francis de Sales.

The Hidden Life of the Soul.

The Light of the Conscience.

Self-Renunciation.

Pascal's Thoughts.

OF THE
LOVE OF GOD

BY S. FRANÇOIS DE SALES, *saint*,
BISHOP (AND PRINCE) OF GENEVA

TRANSLATED BY

H. L. SIDNEY LEAR

Editor of "Fénelon's Letters to Men," "Fénelon's Letters to Women,"
"The Spirit of S. Francis de Sales," etc. etc.

RIVINGTONS
WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE Holy Spirit teaches us that the lips of the Bride—*i.e.* His Church—are as scarlet and as honeycomb; so that all may clearly understand that her doctrine is altogether Holy Love—love scarlet as the blood of the Bridegroom Who kindles it, sweeter than honey through His ineffable Grace. Even so, when the Heavenly Bridegroom first gave the law of His New Covenant to man, He sent tongues of flame to kindle the chosen disciples whose office it was to promulgate the same, as a token that the Gospel when preached was destined to kindle all hearts.

Look at a flight of pigeons in the sunshine. See how their colours change according to the light in which you see them, and that because their feathers are so apt to receive those glowing hues, and the sun is so fain to mingle its rays therewith, that an endless sheen of tints ensues more lovely than precious stones, even as the royal prophet says, "covered with silver wings, and feathers like gold" (Ps. lxxviii. 13). Just so the Church is adorned with a marvellous variety of admirable treatises, sermons, and books, in which the Sun of Righteousness mingles His bright rays with the glowing hues which flow from the rich plumage of His mystic

Dove. And prevailing above all tints and tones, gilding all saintly wisdom and eloquence, is the pure gold of Divine Love. In the Church of God all is of love, in love, to love, and for love.

Yet just as we know that all daylight comes of the sun, and yet we are wont only to say that the sun shines when its actual rays rest on a spot; so while all Christian doctrine comes of Divine Love, we do not apply the term indiscriminately to all theology, but only to such portions thereof as specially treat of the origin, nature, operations, and specialty of love. Many writers have treated this subject with great power, especially those early fathers who served God lovingly, and spoke freely of His great Love. Gladly do we listen to S. Paul, who learned his lessons of love in Paradise itself; or to S. Thomas, whose treatise is worthy of its author. S. Bonaventura and Denys the Carthusian have written on the subject; and Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, has written a work of which Sixtus of Sienna says that it appears as though he alone had been admitted into the privy council of God's heart.

Moreover, in token that a loving soul is more apt to such studies than the wisest of men, it has pleased God to permit certain women, such as S. Catherine of Genoa, and of Sienna, S. Angela di Foligni, and S. Matilda, to produce very remarkable utterances concerning Divine Love. And in our own time there have been works deserving mention of which I have personally

but a superficial knowledge. [Louis of Grenada, Diego Stella de Fonseca, Richeome, a Carmelite father, Cardinal Bellarmino, the Bishop of Belley, Father Laurent de Paris, and S. Teresa are here particularised.]

My present work, while following in the track of all these, contains matter not to be found in any of them, as assuredly they possess many beauties which are not here. My special intention has been different from theirs, save in the general aim of promoting Divine Love. I have merely sought to set the origin, growth, slackening, and working, the peculiarities and blessings, of God's Love simply and plainly before my readers; and if aught else be there it is but as the excrescences, which are not easily avoided by one writing, like myself, amid sundry distractions. Yet even these may have their use, since even Nature herself brings forth so many leaves and tendrils as well as grapes that most vines need pruning.

Men are wont to deal harshly with authors, and to pass hard sentences on them. There are many foolish authors and over-severe critics. A kindly reader is most like to profit; and with a view to conciliation, let me here explain one or two points which might possibly offend.

It may be thought by some that I have said too much, and that it was needless to go so much to the root of the matter; but Divine Love seems to me to be like the herb called *Angelica*, whose roots are as aromatic as its leaves and stalk. My first four Books, and some

other parts, might indeed have been omitted on behalf of those who seek merely to practise the love of God; but they will find help therefrom nevertheless. Others may think that I have omitted too much; but in truth I have sought to adapt myself to the needs of our time, for surely it is important to study the period for which one is writing.

I have not always pointed out the connection of chapters, but it will not be difficult to trace the links. When I published the "*Devout Life*," the Archbishop of Vienne, Pierre de Villars, complimented me, among other things, upon the brevity of my chapters, observing that just as a traveller will turn aside to see some beautiful garden a few yards off when he would not go further, so they who know they will soon reach the end of a chapter are not unwilling to begin it, though were it long they would turn aside.

My object is to help the devout soul to advance in devotion, and therefore I have been constrained to enter upon some points not commonly studied which may seem somewhat abstruse. The groundwork of knowledge is always more or less difficult, and there are not many divers who are ready to seek their pearls from the depths of the ocean; but if you boldly face the difficulty, you will be like those divers of whom Pliny says that they see the sun's light best from the deepest ocean, and you will find light shine upon the hardest parts of my book. I have touched upon various theological questions, but without any controversial

mind, making use less of what I have learned in argument than what my efforts in behalf of souls and twenty-four years' preaching the Gospel lead me to believe most profitable to the good of the Church.

I do not profess to be an author—my capacity and the manner of my busy life do not admit of it; therefore I have written little, and published less. Nineteen years ago, when the Protestant minister of Thonon declared that the Catholic Article concerning the Real Presence in the Eucharist was contrary to the analogy of faith, I was intrusted with a brief reply. [Here follow some other unimportant details.]

In nineteen years one learns and unlearns many things; the language of war is not that of peace, and one must needs speak differently to young beginners or to old comrades. Here I am addressing those who are far advanced in the spiritual life. We have in this town a congregation of women who, having left the world, live together for the service of our Lord under the protection of His blessed Mother; and while their purity and devotion have often greatly helped me, I have sought in return to help them both by sermons and spiritual instructions, generally delivered before sundry religious, and other men of eminent piety. On these occasions I have had occasion to handle the most delicate spiritual subjects, and much here set forth owes its origin to this source, the Mother of that Society having continually urged me to use my brief intervals of leisure to this end. My attachment to her

is so great that she had no small influence with me in the matter. I had long intended to write somewhat concerning Divine Love, but not at such length as I have here done. It was said of old that Phidias represented nothing so well as the gods, or Apelles as Alexander; one is not always equally successful. If I fall short herein, good reader, be patient, and God will bless your study.

It is in this mind that I have dedicated my book to the mother of dilection and the father of pure love, as I dedicated the Introduction to the "Devout Life" to that Holy Child Who is the Saviour of those who love, and the Love of them that be saved.

God bless you, dear reader, and enrich you with His Holy Love!

ANNEXI. The Festival of the most loving
Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, 1616.

DIEU SOIT BENY.

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BOOK I.

INTRODUCTION TO THE WHOLE TREATISE.

CHAPTER I.

Now, in order to the perfecting of Human Nature, God has committed the Government of all the Soul's Faculties to the Will.

UNION between several and distinct parts produces order ; from order spring adaptation and proportion, and these, when carried to perfection, result in beauty. An army is perfect when all its several branches are so perfectly ordered that their distinct parts are combined into thorough co-operation, so as to make one whole. To produce beautiful music we require not only clear, well-accentuated, separate voices, but that these voices be so combined together as to produce correct consonance and harmony, by means of the union of their distinct parts, and by the individuality of separate voices amid that union, which results in a perfect combination not unsuitably called harmonious discord.

Now, as is well said by the Angelical Doctor S. Thomas, quoting S. Denys the Great, the beautiful and the good are not the same thing, though they are closely allied. The good pleases the appetite and the will, the beautiful the mind and understanding ; or, to put it in another way, the good is that the enjoyment of which satisfies us, while of the beautiful the perception delights us. Thus we never attribute corporal beauty to any objects save those which are tangible to the sight or hearing ; we do not speak of

beautiful scents or tastes, but we do of beautiful voices or colours. If, then, the beautiful is such because its perception delights us, it must require, beyond unity of its distinctive parts, order and adaptation, a certain brightness and splendour, in order that it may be visible and recognisable. A voice, to be beautiful, must be clear and distinct; speech must be intelligible; a colour bright and pure. Shadow and darkness are not beautiful, and do not impart beauty, because amid them we cannot distinguish order or separation, unity or adaptation; and thus S. Denys has said that "God, as Sovereign Beauty, is the Author of all the beautiful adaptation, all the brilliancy, and all the grace we find;" suffering His own rays of light to fall on all things, inasmuch as these three properties are essential to beauty. And assuredly beauty were unreal, profitless, and dead, unless kindled and inspired by brightness and splendour, which gives it life. But living things cannot attain to beauty without that good grace which, to the adaptation of parts, adds adaptation of movement and action, which is the soul and life of beauty in animated objects. So in the Sovereign Beauty of God we recognise union, as well as unity of Being in the brightness of the Divine Persons, joined to an incomprehensible adaptation of all perfection in action and movement, adjusted, so to say, in the one and singular perfection of that purely Divine Act, which is God Himself, Unchangeable, Invariable, as we shall consider further on.

Thus God, willing all things to be good and beautiful, has reduced their multiplicity and diverseness to perfect unity, and has, so to say, ordered them on monarchical principles, so that they should hang one upon another, all ultimately depending upon Him, the Sovereign Monarch. He combines all members in one body under a head; individuals He combines into a family, families into a town, towns into a province, provinces into a kingdom, placing a single king over each kingdom. And in like measure, amid the in-

numerable variety of actions, impulses, feelings, likings, habits, passions, faculties, and powers which are in man, God has established a natural monarch—the Will—which governs and presides over all the elements of the little world within, as though He said to the Will what Pharaoh said to Joseph : “Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled. . . . See, I have set thee over all the land.”¹ Nevertheless this domination of the will is very variously exercised.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Different Ways in which the Will rules the Powers of the Soul.

THE father of a family governs his wife, children, and servants by rules and orders, which they are bound to obey, although they have the power to dispute them. Serfs or slaves he governs by force, and they have no power to resist. But he governs his horses, mules, and oxen by art ; bridling, loosing, urging, or restraining them. Now, the will governs our external movements after the manner of slaves ; for unless there be some literal obstacles, these are always obedient to the will. We open or shut our mouth, we move tongue, hands, feet, eyes, and all other members endowed with the power of movement, according to our will, without resistance. But the senses, and the faculties of nourishing, growing, or propagating, are not so easily controlled : therein we require the assistance of art. If you call a slave, he comes ; if you bid him halt, he halts ; but you cannot look for the like obedience from your falcon. Would you recall him, you must hold out his lure ; would you tame him, you must put on his hood. You bid a servant turn to the right or the left, and he does so ; but if you would turn

¹ Gen. xli. 40, 41.

a horse in like manner you must use the bridle. You cannot bid your eyes not to see, your ears not to hear, your hands not to feel, your stomach not to digest, your body not to grow; for none of these are intelligent agents, or capable of obedience. "No man can add one cubit to his stature."¹ Rachel desired to conceive offspring, but could not.² Men sometimes eat without being nourished or making increase. He who would rule his powers must do it by diligence. When a physician treats a baby, he gives it no orders; but he bids its nurse do certain things for it, or he prescribes a certain diet or medicine for herself, so that, by means of her milk, the doctor's will is carried out in the sick child, who is not even capable of recognising it. It is useless to lay down rules of abstinence and sobriety to the throat or stomach; you must forbid the hands to supply the mouth with meat or drink beyond a certain limit. You must give or hold supplies as reason dictates to the faculty which takes action; you must turn aside the eyes, or cover them with their natural hood, and shut them, if you would not have them see; and by such contrivances you will bring them into subjection to the will. Even so our Lord tells us that there are eunuchs who are such for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake,³ that is to say, by force of will, not of necessity. It were folly to bid a horse not grow, or wax fat, or become frisky; if you desire all this, you must limit his rack: there is no use in giving him orders, you must subdue him by force.

The will, moreover, has power over the understanding and memory, since, amid sundry matters which the understanding may receive or the memory may retain, it rests with the will to decide to which these powers shall be applied. Of course it cannot wield or marshal them as peremptorily as it does hands, feet, or tongue, because the sensitive faculties, especially imagination, do not obey the will promptly or infallibly, and both memory and understanding

¹ Matt. vi. 27.

² Gen. xxx.

³ Matt. xix. 12.

depend on these faculties for their operation ; but nevertheless the will excites, uses, and directs them at its pleasure, though not so continuously or invariably but that a changeable imagination is liable to distract them, even as the Apostle exclaims, "What I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that I do ;"¹ and we too are often constrained to lament that we dwell rather upon the evil which we hate than the good that we love.

CHAPTER III.

How the Will contests the Sensuous Appetite.

WE see, then, that the will rules the memory, understanding, and imagination, not forcibly, but in virtue of its authority, so that it is not invariably obeyed, any more than a father is always obeyed by his children and servants. It is the same with the sensuous appetite, which, as S. Augustine says, is called concupiscence in sinners, and is subject to the mind and will, as a wife to her husband ; inasmuch just as it was said to the woman, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee ;"² so it was said to Cain that his desire should be to his lusts, and they should reign over him :³ for the desire being to anything implies that it will rule or reign over a man. S. Bernard says : "O man, it is in thy power if thou wilt to make a servant of thine enemy ; thine appetite is subject to thee, and thou canst govern it. The enemy may excite a sense of temptation in thee, but it rests with thee to consent or refuse. If thou sufferest appetite to lead thee into sin, then thou wilt be subject to it, and it will master thee, for whoso committeth sin he is the servant of sin ; but before thou hast sinned, and while thou hast not as yet consented to sin, and hast only felt the tempta-

¹ Rom. vii. 15.

² Gen. iii. 16.

³ Gen. iv. 7.

tion, thine appetite is subject to thee, and thou canst master it."

Before the Emperor is elected, he is subject to the electors, who reign over him, having it in their power to raise him to imperial dignity or to reject him ; but once elected by them, they are subject to him, and he reigns over them. Before the will consents to the appetite, it rules over it, but having consented, the will becomes a slave. In short, this sensuous appetite is verily a rebellious, seditious, restless subject, and we must own ourselves unable so entirely to subdue it but that it will raise itself up again, plot, and attack us ; yet, nevertheless, the will is so much stronger than it that, if it chooses, it can check, defeat, and repulse the sensuous appetite, which is repulsed directly we refuse consent to its suggestions. We cannot hinder the conception of sin, but we may strangle it before coming to the birth by means of action.

Now, this lust or sensuous appetite has twelve actions, by means of which, as so many mutinous leaders, it seduces men. These trouble the soul and excite the body : accordingly S. Augustine calls the first perturbations, and the last passions. They all bear reference to good and evil, either to be obtained or avoided. Good, simply looked at in itself, excites the foremost and chief of all passions—love : if we possess it not, it excites desire ; if we expect to be able to gratify this desire, hope is kindled ; if we do not expect to attain it, we feel despair ; when we actually possess it, it excites joy. On the other hand, so soon as we perceive evil, we hate it ; if absent, we fly from it ; if we believe ourselves unable to avoid it, we fear ; if we imagine that it can be avoided, we become bold ; if we realise its presence, we are sad ; and then wrath and anger rise up to repulse, or at all events to avenge it. Should such vengeance fail, we are grieved ; if it succeeds, we feel that satisfaction and strength which are the charm of triumph ; for just as the attainment of good rejoices the heart, so victory over evil confirms

courage. And meanwhile the will reigns over all this throng of sensuous passions, rejecting their suggestions, repulsing their attacks, hindering their effect, stedfastly refusing that consent without which they can do no harm, and thereby defeating them sooner or later; crushing, beating down, repressing, and if not wholly exterminating them, at least rendering them powerless.

Of a truth it is in order to train us in virtue and spiritual strength that this multitude of passions is suffered to linger about our souls; and the Stoics, who professed that wise men are exempt from them, were greatly mistaken. However, while denying the fact, they practically proved it, as we may judge from an anecdote related by S. Augustine. Aulus Gellius, he says, when at sea with a famous Stoic, and being overtaken by a heavy storm, the Stoic was overwhelmed with fear, grew pale, and trembled, so that all on board noticed it with amazement, even while sharing his danger. The storm over and danger past, one after another began to laugh at the Stoic for his terror, among others an Asiatic voluptuary, who taunted him with having been ashy-white with fear, while he himself remained unmoved. To which the Stoic replied by quoting the answer of Aristippus the philosopher on a similar occasion: "Verily," he said, "you had no need to fear for the soul of such a worthless fellow, but I rightly dreaded the loss of the soul of Aristippus;"—which story Aulus Gellius, an eyewitness, related, and in which we find witness from their own mouths that two Stoics were overwhelmed with fear, and that by fear which takes expression in the countenance, thereby proving itself to be a passion.

It is a great folly to affect an impossible wisdom; and the Church has condemned such folly in certain presumptuous anchorites who went in opposition to all Holy Scripture, especially to the great Apostle, who says, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind."¹ S. Augustine says

¹ Rom. vii. 23.

that the citizens of the Holy City of God, who pass through this life's pilgrimage according to God's Will, fear, desire, suffer, and rejoice, although their passions are different to ours; and S. Jerome and the Schoolmen who follow him dare not call them passions, out of reverence, but prefer the name of *pro-passion*, implying that the active emotions which our Lord experienced took the place of passions, without being actually such, inasmuch as He only endured so much thereof and as He willed, ruling and guiding them at His pleasure; which is not the case with us sinners, who are subject to these passions without respect to our will, and greatly to the damage of our soul's health.

CHAPTER IV.

Love governs all the Affections and Passions, and even the Will, although that in its turn governs Love.

LOVE being the first attraction we have to what is good, it surely must precede desire; for what do we desire save that which we love? It precedes delectation; for how can we take pleasure in the enjoyment of a thing we do not love? It precedes hope, for we only hope for that which we love. It precedes hatred, for we hate evil only out of love for what is good, and evil is only evil inasmuch as it is contrary to what is good. Even so with all other passions and affections, which all have their root in love. So again these passions are good or bad, virtuous or vicious, according as the love whence they spring is good or bad, for it so animates them that these seem all one with it. S. Augustine reduces all passions and affections to four, therein following Boetius, Cicero, Virgil, and most ancient writers. These he defines as love seeking to possess itself of the beloved object, which he calls *lust*; attaining and

possessing it, which is *joy*; flying from what is opposed to it, which is *fear*; and if overtaken thereby and suffering, *grief*. All these passions become evil if the object of love be evil; good if it be good. The inhabitants of the City of God fear, hope, suffer, and rejoice; and because their love is upright so are all their affections. The doctrines of Christianity subject the mind to God, that He should guide and sustain it, and subject all these passions to it, so that, being guided aright, they may be used to promote truth and justice. An upright will is holy love; an evil will is love of evil; in a word, love so rules the will as to make it whatever itself is. A woman when she marries takes her husband's rank, becoming noble if he be noble, a queen if he be king, a duchess if he be duke. Just so the will assumes the character of that love to which it is wedded,—carnal if it be carnal, spiritual if it be spiritual; and all the affections which issue thence,—desire, joy, hope, fear, sadness, take their shape likewise from that source. The will is acted upon by the affections, among which love is foremost, and it shapes all that follow.

But all this does not hinder the will from ruling over love, all the more that it must love voluntarily, and among a choice of affections it may select what seems it good; else there were no forbidden or enjoined love. So the will is mistress over the affections, as a maiden over her suitors, among whom she can select whom she pleases. But even as with marriage she renounces her freedom and becomes subject to her husband, so when the will has chosen the object of its affection, it becomes subject thereto; and as the wife is subject to her husband so long as he lives, but if he dies she resumes her liberty and may marry another, so while the will holds to an affection it reigns, and the will is subject, but if that affection chance to perish it can pursue another. But the will has a freedom which the wife has not, for the will can cast aside its attachment whensoever it pleases, by means of the understanding

and of a firm resolution ; *e.g.*, when a man desires that the Love of God should reign supreme in his heart, he can cast out self-love, or, if not wholly cast it out, at least he can so crush it that, while yet lingering, it has no power ; and, on the other hand, he may forsake the higher Divine Love and cleave to creatures, therein committing that spiritual adultery of which the Heavenly Bridegroom so often accuses sinners.

CHAPTER V.

The Affections of the Will.

THESE are no less emotions in that intellectual, reasonable appetite which we call will than in the sensuous appetite ; but we call the first affections and the last passions. Many heathen philosophers have loved God and their country, goodness and wisdom ; they have shunned vice, coveted honour, fled despairingly from calumny ; they have even craved for happiness after this life, have struggled bravely in pursuit of virtue, have feared blame, avoided many crimes, avenged injury done to others, and overthrown tyrants in a disinterested spirit. All such emotions were of the reason, the senses being inapplicable to such matters, so that these were affections pertaining to the intellectual, not passions of the sensual appetite.

Do we not often experience sensual passions which are altogether contrary to the affections of the mind or will which we feel simultaneously ? The young man of whom S. Jerome tells who bit off his own tongue and spit it into the face of the temptress who beset him, was he not inspired with a strong affection of the will, in opposition to the passion of lust which was forcibly urged upon him ? Do we not many a time tremble amid the risks into which our will forces us ? Do we not abhor the voluptuousness in which

our senses delight, and love those spiritual blessings from which sense draws back? This is what constitutes the war we daily experience between the spirit and the flesh,—between the outward man, who cleaves to that which is sensual, and the inward man, who delights in the law of God,¹—between the first Adam, who was led by his Eve—that is, by lust—and the Last Adam, Who is inspired by heavenly wisdom and holy truth.

The Stoics, while, as S. Augustine says, they denied that a wise man can have passions, yet confessed, it seems, that he had affections, which they called *eupathies*, or good passions. They said that the wise man did not lust, but desired; he never exceeded though he was glad; he was not fearful, save in the way of foresight and precaution; in short, he was moved solely by reason. And therefore they specially denied that the wise man could be sad, sadness pertaining only to an actual evil, whereas no evil can happen to the wise man, who can only suffer harm through himself, according to them. Most assuredly they were not wrong in saying that there are good affections in the reasoning part of man; but they were wrong in saying that he had no passions in his sensuous part, and that sadness could not touch his heart; for, not to mention that they themselves were often troubled, how could wisdom deprive us of pity, which is a virtuous sadness which inspires the heart with a desire to succour other men in their trouble? Accordingly, the best of all heathen, Epictetus, did not hold this error that a wise man was subject to no passions, and indeed S. Augustine proves that all the Stoics' arguments on this point were mere verbiage.

Now, the affections of our higher nature are more or less noble and spiritual according as their objects are higher or lower. Some spring from our own experience, some from human knowledge, others from faith, and some arise simply from the soul's acquiescence in the Will of God. The first we call natural affections,

¹ Rom. vii.

for it is natural to desire health, food, clothing, congenial society. The second we call rational, being based on the perceptions of reason which excite the will to seek quietude of heart, moral virtue, true honour, and a philosophic contemplation of eternal things. The third manner of affections we call Christian, for they spring from the teaching of our Lord, causing us to love voluntary poverty, chastity, and the glories of Paradise. But the fourth kind of affections we call Divine and supernatural, because it is God Himself Who puts them into the heart, and because they look and tend to God without intermediate aid or natural light, as we shall see more fully in considering what goes on in the sanctuary of the soul. These supernatural affections may be classed under three heads,—love for the beauty of the mysteries of the Faith, love for the blessings promised us in the next life, and love for the Sovereign Goodness of the Most Holy and Eternal God.

CHAPTER VI.

How the Love of God predominates over all other Love.

THE will governs all other mental faculties, but it is itself governed by that love which rules it and shapes it. Now the Love of God is supreme above all other loves, and that so entirely, that unless it holds sovereign sway it must perish altogether. Ishmael did not inherit with his younger brother Isaac ; Esau was doomed to serve Jacob ; Joseph received obeisance not only from his brethren, but from his father and his mother, as represented by Benjamin, according to his youthful dreams. Surely there is some hidden meaning in the superiority thus accorded to the younger over the elder. Divine Love is clearly the younger among human affections, for, as S. Paul says, "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is

natural."¹ But this younger inherits all power; and self-love, like another Esau, is doomed to serve it, while not only all the other emotions, as brethren, do it obeisance, but likewise the understanding and will, representing father and mother. All are subject to this Heavenly Love, which must be monarch, and that supreme.

Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph had all a supernatural birth, inasmuch as Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel, barren by nature, conceived them through the grace of God; and thus they acquired superiority over their brethren. Even so holy Love is the child of miracle, for the will of man cannot compass it, unless it be shed into his heart by the Spirit of God, and thus being supernatural it must needs reign over all other affections, including the understanding and will. And though there be other supernatural emotions,—fear, piety, hope, etc.—even as Esau and Benjamin were likewise supernatural sons of barren mothers,—yet holy Love is the heir, as being the child of promise, for through it Heaven is promised to man. Salvation is set forth to faith, it is prepared for hope, but it is only given to Love. Faith points out the way to the Promised Land, like a pillar of cloud or fire—bright or dark; hope feeds us with sweetness; but Love leads us in, like the Ark of the Covenant,—crosses Jordan with us, and will abide for ever with us in that Heavenly Land promised to the true Israelite, where we shall no longer need the guidance of faith or the support of hope.

Holy Love dwells in the highest region of the mind, where it offers its sacrifice, like to Abraham on the mountain and our Lord on Calvary; so that, being exalted on high, it may be heard and obeyed by all its subjects, that is, by all our faculties and affections, which it rules most sweetly; for love has no bond-slaves, but subjects all by so acceptable a power, that although there be nought so strong as love neither is there aught so sweet.

The soul is governed by its virtues, and of these

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 46.

love, as chief, rules and adapts all others, not merely in right of being first, but because God, having created man in His Own Image and Likeness, wills that he should be all love, even as He is.

CHAPTER VII

What Love is.

THE will is so adapted to what is good, that directly it becomes conscious thereof it is attracted thereto, as to a thing so closely pertaining to itself, that each is necessary clearly to define the other. For what is our real good save that which we desire? and what is the will save that faculty which reaches and tends to our good, or to what we count as such?

So then the will, having a perception of its good by means of the understanding, experiences simultaneously a delectation and complaisance which urge it gently but forcibly towards that object of desire, in order to attain union thereto, to which end it is moved to seek all suitable means. Thus the will having a close sympathy with what is good, that sympathy evolves the complaisance felt by the will when perceiving it; this complaisance urges the will towards that good; such movement tends to union, until at last the will, seeking eagerly after this union, goes in quest after all that may promote it.

Generally speaking, love comprises all this, even as a lofty tree, of which the root is the sympathy of will for what is good, the stem its moving force, all seeking, aiming, and pursuit of good the branches, while the fruit is union and enjoyment. Thus love seems to be made up of these five main parts, under which numerous smaller parts are comprised, as we shall see further on.

Call to mind the attraction between the magnet and steel, for that is a lively image of the love of which

I speak. Iron has so great a sympathy with the magnet, that so soon as they come within reach it is attracted, and after sundry quivering motions indicative of satisfaction, it draws to the magnet and struggles in every possible way to unite itself thereto. Do not these inanimate objects clearly represent the character of real love?

Complacency^{*} (or delight) and the bearing of the will towards the beloved object is love, strictly speaking; yet is that delight only the beginning of love, and the action of the will is the essential part; so that while both may be called love, there is a difference. We call dawn the day, and so this first complacency the heart feels may be called love; but even as the true day lies between dawn and sunset, so true love lies in that action of the will and heart which follow upon complacency and result in union. So to say, that which is good seizes and enthrals the heart with complacency, but draws and leads it to itself by love; complacency brings it forth, love achieves the journey; complacency awakens the heart, love leads it to action; the heart spreads its wings in complacency, but it can only fly by means of love. In short, love

* F. W. Faber defines the love of complacency thus:—"When we love God, we rejoice that He is God, that He is so good and perfect as He is. We call this feeling the love of complacency" (*All for Jesus*, p. 63). "This complacency comes from the very knowledge of God which faith imparts to us; and it is continually growing in us, unless sin and lukewarmness hinder and kill it" (p. 306). "The love of complacency, strictly speaking, is the joy we feel in the infinite perfections of God, that He is what He is. But just as the knowledge of God by faith cannot stop at knowledge, but passes into a necessary complacency, and that necessary complacency into free acts of praise and of desire; so also this free love of complacency cannot terminate in itself. It passes on to another and a further love, which is called the love of Benevolence. Our love of God is just the opposite of God's Love of us. He loves us first with a love of benevolence, working in us all the good we have, and then, when it is worked, loving us with a love of complacency in His own work within us" (p. 309).

is the motion and drawing forth of the heart towards its good.

Sundry great teachers have said that love was really the same as this complacency, since not only does the first spring of love rise from the delight which the heart feels on coming face to face with what is good, going on to a further delight through union with the object loved; but further, it is sustained by complacency, and can only exist by means of that delight which is its foster-parent; so that if delight (or complacency) cease, love likewise ceases. Even as the bee comes to life in honey, and seeks honey alone, so love is born of delight, exists for and tends to delight. It is the weight of matter which moves and arrests an object; the gravity of a stone causes it to move and to fall so soon as nothing hinders it; the same gravity keeps it moving, and finally stops it when it can go no further. And just so complacency moves the will and causes it finally to rest in the beloved object. Seeing this, it is not strange that wise men have counted love and delight as one and the same, although really, inasmuch as love is a true passion of the soul, it cannot stop short in mere complacency, but must be found in the action resulting therefrom. And this action caused by delight persists till there be union or enjoyment. Thus, when seeking a present good, it ceases not to urge and draw and join the heart to the object loved, which it enjoys in this manner; and this we call the love of complacency. But if that good which the heart seeks be distant, absent, or future, or that union cannot be so thoroughly attained as is wished, then the action of love which excites the heart presses on in longing, and is fitly called desire; for desire is but appetite, or concupiscence, for that which we have not yet fain would have.

Again, there are other impulses of love, by which we desire things which we in nowise expect or pretend to attain, as, *e.g.*, when one says, "I would I were already in Paradise!" "Oh, that I were a king!" "Were I but

young!" "Would that I had never sinned!" Such impossible desires are more accurately wishes: when we really desire we say "I will;" but when we wish what are but imperfect wishes we can but say "I would." No one says "I do wish to be young again," knowing it to be impossible; and such wishes, or, as the Schoolmen call them, "*velleities*,"¹ are merely an expression of will without result, because the will, conscious of their impossibility, checks the movement, and stops short in the mere wish, as if saying, "Such and such a thing would be very acceptable to me, and although I can neither ask nor hope it, I gladly would were it possible."

In short, these wishes or *velleities* are a lower affection which may be called the love of simple approbation, wherein the soul confesses certain things to be admirable and desirable were they within reach.

There is another class of wishes yet more imperfect than these, in that their movements are not checked by impossibility, but by their total incompatibility with more forcible wishes or desires; as when a sick man desires unwholesome food, which is within his reach, and yet abstains from it, fearing to make himself worse: the two desires conflicting,—one to eat certain meats, the other to regain health. But because the latter is strongest it extinguishes the other. Jephthah wished to save his daughter,² but inasmuch as that was incompatible with his desire to fulfil his vow, he willed that which he did not wish, *i.e.* to sacrifice his child, and wished that which he willed not, to save her. Pilate and Herod respectively wished to deliver the Saviour and S. John Baptist, but that wish being incompatible in the one case with Pilate's desire to please the Jews and Cæsar,³ in the other Herodias and her daughter,⁴ they were vain wishes. And in proportion as the things thus incompatible are unworthy so the wish becomes more imperfect. Thus

¹ "*Velleity*, the lowest degree of desire."—*Johnson*.

² Judges xi.

³ Mark xv. 15.

⁴ Mark vi.

Herod's wish to save S. John was more imperfect than Pilate's to deliver our Lord ; because the latter feared the wrath of Cæsar and of the people, while the former only feared a woman. Such wishes, which are not impossible, but incompatible with stronger desires, are vain and profitless. When impossible we say, "I wish, but I cannot ;" but in the other case, "I wish, but I will not."

CHAPTER VIII.

What that Attraction is which excites Love.

WE say that the eye sees, the ear hears, the tongue speaks, the understanding ponders, the memory remembers, and the will loves ; but all the while we know very well that it is the man himself who does all these things by means of divers faculties and organs. Even so it is the man who, by means of that affective faculty which we call the will, tends towards the good, and has that great sympathy with it which is the first source of love. They are assuredly in error who have supposed that resemblance was the chief attraction whence love arises. Who does not see that old men often dearly love and are loved by little children ? that wise men love the ignorant, provided they be teachable ? that sick men love their doctors ? And if we may borrow an illustration from inanimate things, what resemblance is there between the magnet and iron ? or between water and a sponge ? Yet this sucks up water greedily. So with earthly love, which sometimes is more passionate between persons of opposite qualities than those who resemble each other. No ; the attraction lies in a certain proportion, adaptation, or sympathy between the lover and the object of love. The sick man loves his physician because of the adaptation of the physician's skill to the patient's needs ; the physician and the teacher love

their patient or scholar because they can employ their faculty on his behalf. Old men love children, not from sympathy, but because the simplicity and weakness of the one are a counterpart to the prudence and firmness of the other ; while the little ones love the aged because of their notice, and a hidden consciousness of needing their support. We find discords introduced into harmony in order to the perfection of music, and the beauty of enamel or diaper depends upon a happy contrast of precious stones and colours. Even so love does not always depend upon resemblance or sympathy, but upon that correspondence and proportion whereby each part, when united, is improved and perfected. The head nowise resembles the body, or the hand the arm, yet have they so great a mutual correspondence, and are so fitly adapted, that they perfect one another's action. And sometimes we see glad and sorrowful, or harsh and gentle souls, drawn together by the influence each exercises over the other, thereby mutually improving one another.¹ Doubtless when to correspondence you add resemblance, love grows stronger ; for likeness being the true soul of unity, two like objects united by correspondence to one end, they attain rather to unity than union.

So, then, the first source of love is attraction of the lover to the object of love ; and this attraction consists in a correspondence which is that mutual adaptation whereby things are disposed for union, through which they tend to perfect one another. This will be clearer as we go on.

¹ Was this passage in John Keble's mind, when he wrote :

" He loves when age and youth are met,
Fervent old age and youth serene,
Their high and low in concord set
For sacred song, Joy's golden mean.

He loves when some clear soaring mind
Is drawn by mutual piety

To simple souls and unrefined,
Who in life's shadiest covert lie."—*Christian Year*.

CHAPTER IX.

Love tends to Union.

SOLOMON treats very exquisitely the love of the devout soul and its Saviour in that inspired Book which by reason of its sweetness we call the Song of Songs, wherein he sets forth that spiritual love which exists between God and us, by the correspondence of our heart's affections with His sacred inspiration, under the symbolism of a pure Shepherd and shepherdess. And therein he makes the Bride to speak first, as it were taken by surprise, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Mouth,"¹ whereby the soul aspires to a chaste union with her Bridegroom. In all times the kiss has been instinctively used as the symbol of perfect love,—the union of hearts. We display our passions and the impulses we possess in common with other animals in our eyes, brow, and general expression: but "a man may be known by his look,"² Solomon says; and Aristotle, accounting for the custom of painting the face only of great men, says it is because the face shows what we are. But we only put forth the words and thoughts which issue from our spiritual or reasonable part, and which separate us from other animals, by means of the mouth. In fact, to pour out the soul or heart means to speak. "Pour out your heart before Him," the Psalmist says,³ *i.e.* give utterance to the feelings of your heart in words. And the devout Hannah, though "her voice was not heard, only her lips moved," said, "I have poured out my soul before the Lord."⁴ Even so those who kiss lay mouth to mouth in token of a desire to pour out their hearts one to the other in perfect union; and therefore at all times, and among the holiest men of old, a kiss has been the sign of love, being employed

¹ Cant. i. 2.² Ecclus. xix. 29.³ Ps. lxii. 8.⁴ 1 Sam. i. 15.

as such universally among the primitive Christians. Thus we find S. Paul writing, "Salute one another with an holy kiss;"¹ and Judas betrayed our Lord with a kiss, because, as has been said, it was His custom to receive His disciples thus, as also the little children of whom we read that He took them up in His arms and blessed them.

Thus, a kiss being the token of united hearts, the Bride, whose one desire is union with her Beloved, cries out, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Mouth." What else do I crave or desire, save to pour out my soul to Him, and He to me, so that, inseparably united, we may dwell together for ever !

When the Holy Spirit speaks of perfect love it is always in terms of union : "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," S. Luke says.² And our Lord asked for His followers "that they may be one."³ S. Paul bids us "keep unity of spirit in the bond of peace;"⁴ all which unity is the perfection of love. Holy Scripture tells us that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."⁵ S. Gregory of Nazianzen and S. Augustine speak of their friends as having but one soul with them, and even Aristotle earlier still said, "When we would express the love we bear to a friend we say, His soul and mine are but as one ; hate separates, love unites." Therefore the aim and end of love is nothing less than union between him who loves and the object of his love.

CHAPTER X.

The Union which Love seeks is Spiritual.

YOU must bear in mind that there are natural unions, such as those of resemblance, consanguinity,

¹ Rom. xvi. 16.

² Acts iv. 32.

³ John xvii. 11.

⁴ Eph. iv. 3.

⁵ 1 Sam. xviii. 1.

cause and effect, as also others which may be called voluntary, inasmuch as though of the natural order of things, they depend upon the will,—to wit, benefits conferred which unite the giver and receiver, social intercourse, and the like. Now a natural union produces love, and from out that love there springs another, perfecting love. Thus parent and child, brother and sister, united by birth, are drawn more closely together by a voluntary oneness of mind; and in such unions nature begins what the will completes and perfects. In voluntary unions love comes first, and tends to bring people together, such union increasing love, inasmuch as love seeks intercourse, which intercourse fosters love. Thus love leads to the union of marriage, and that union maintains and increases love; so that from all points of view we may say that love tends to union. But here we must stop and ask, To what kind of union? Observe that the Bride of the Canticles craves union with the Bridegroom by a kiss, which represents that spiritual union which is contracted by an interchange of soul with soul. It is the man that loves, but he loves with his will, and thus the aim of his love depends upon the nature of that will. His will is spiritual, therefore the union to which his love aspires is spiritual, and that all the more because the heart, the seat and source of love, would not be perfected by union with temporal things, but rather degraded.

Truly there are certain passions which, like the mistletoe on trees, put forth an extraneous, superfluous growth, and mingle with love; yet they are not in any sense real love, but mere excrescences, liable greatly to damage, and if not cut off, altogether to destroy love; and for this reason:—the more separate acts the soul undertakes, so much the less well and vigorously it performs them, because as its active power is spread abroad there is less to concentrate on any given spot; just as men absorbed in many things are not specially earnest about any.

You cannot fixedly consider the features of a face and at the same time closely follow the harmony of a musical performance, nor deeply study both form and colour at the same moment. He who would speak effectively cannot give his mind the while to anything else. I know that it is said of Cæsar and of Origen that they could give heed to several things at once; but at best the more attention is divided the less there can be for each object. So then there is a difference between seeing, hearing, and knowing *more*, or *better*: he who sees less sees better; he who sees more sees not so well. As a rule men of very general acquirements have a less accurate knowledge than those whose mind is specially concentrated on one subject; and, in like manner, when the soul expends its affective powers in various directions its force is necessarily subdivided and enfeebled. There are three manner of affective actions,—those of spirit, reason, and sense. When love pours itself forth by all, it is certainly wider spread, but less deep; when confined to one, it is deeper, though not so wide. Fire is a symbol of love: observe what a loud report it makes through the cannon's mouth; that report would be greatly lessened if it found several vents instead of one. Since then love is an act of the will, he who would not only love nobly and generously, but forcibly and actively, must limit his affection within spiritual bounds; for the moment it is devoted to the sensual and sensitive those intellectual processes which are of the very essence of love become weakened.

Philosophers of old have said that there are two kind of extasy, one which lifts us above ourselves, the other plunging us below; thereby admitting that man's nature lies midway between the angel and the brute, on the one side by his intellectual, on the other by his sensual qualities. By continual effort he may rise from the lower state, and, exercising his intellectual side, he may attain closer likeness to the angel; while, if he yield to sensual influences, he

descends and comes nearer to the brute. And inasmuch as extasy means merely a going out of self, there may be extasy on either side, higher or lower. So, then, they whose hearts are ravished by Divine and spiritual delights are verily carried out of themselves, but after a blessed fashion which raises them in their noblest parts to the angels' level, albeit men by nature, —human angels, so to call them. But, on the other hand, those who are seduced by sensual pleasures fall from their midway position to the level of the brute, going out of themselves only to take up a far lower position.

Now, accordingly as such extasy be more considerable in either direction, the more it restrains the soul and keeps it from returning to its own level. Thus holy men who are rapt in God and heavenly contemplation lose for the time all consciousness of their senses, all power of outward action, the soul absorbing every faculty; and, in like manner, the sensualist who is plunged in voluptuous enjoyment loses all power of mind and reason: in mystical illustration of which study the scriptural history of Elijah in the chariot of fire,¹ and that of Nebuchadnezzar driven forth to become as the beasts of the field.²

If, then, the soul expends its love in sensual acts which lower it, it needs must be that the higher love wax feebler; and so far from real love being strengthened by that union to which sensual love tends, it fades and perishes thereby. "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them:"³ so, while the intellectual soul bestows a noble love on some worthy object, it often happens that the lower senses feed upon their own pasture, and destroy that union which can come only of true, solid love.

When Elisha had healed Naaman he refused the gold and valuables offered him, but his faithless servant Gehazi ran after Naaman, and took surreptitiously what his master had refused.⁴ Spiritual love,

¹ 2 Kings ii. 11. ² Dan. iv. ³ Job i. 14. ⁴ 2 Kings v.

which ought to be master of the soul, refuses every sensual union; and is content with pure benevolence; but the senses, which are or ought to be as servants, go forth and seek that which it has refused, thus, Gehazi-like, dishonouring their master and his pure intention. In proportion as the soul turns to such material union, so does it lose hold of the finer spiritual union of the heart.

Thus we see that all such union as is simply sensual and animal not merely does not create, but even weakens or destroys love. When Amnon had gratified his incestuous passion for Tamar he hated her more intensely than he had seemed to love her,¹ so that he thrust her out. Take thyme, rosemary, cloves, and other scented ingredients together, and their joint odour is agreeable, but not nearly so much so as the essence distilled from the same, in which the sweetness of each several thing combines into an aroma far more powerful than that which the united substances gave forth. So love may be found in the union of sensual and intellectual powers, but never so excellent a love as when all spiritual emotions, purged from those which are corporeal, unite in a pure and spiritual love, — a love far stronger, truer, and deeper than the other.

Low-minded persons measure love as they do coin, by its weight, and hold sensual love to be strong because it is fierce and noisy, solid because it is rude and earthly; but love is like fire, the flame of which is brighter according as it is fed with a purer material, and which is more speedily extinguished by heaping earth upon it than in any other way. The nobler the object of love so much the livelier and more enduring its affections will be; and there is no surer way of destroying it than by descending to a low, earthly union. S. Gregory says that we find this difference between spiritual and sensual pleasures, that whereas men long for the latter before possessing them, and are disgusted with possession, on the contrary, they

¹ 2 Sam. xiii.

shrink from spiritual pleasures beforehand, and only value them when experienced. So mere animal love finds an end in union, and most brutes are heavy and dull after satisfying their appetites ; whereas spiritual love finds even more than it looked for in union with its desired object, and greater satisfaction, so that delight continues even increasing with union, and union with delight.

CHAPTER XI.

There are Two Parts of the Soul.

WE have one indivisible soul, but it contains divers degrees of perfection, for it is living, feeling, and reasonable, and subject to sundry dispositions and inclinations which move it to seek or avoid certain things. There are some plants whose neighbourhood the vine abhors, while it delights in the olive tree : there is a natural antipathy between man and the serpent, so that it is even said the latter is killed by the saliva of a fasting man ; while he and the sheep are adapted and friendly to each other. Such inclinations are not founded on any experience of usefulness or harm, but spring from a hidden instinct which calls forth an unconscious sympathy or antipathy.

Secondly, we possess a sensuous appetite, which stimulates us to seek or avoid certain things, just as animals seek various kinds of food according to the characteristics of each ; and in this appetite consists, or from it issues, the love we call sensual or brutish, but which properly is not love at all, but merely appetite.

Thirdly, inasmuch as we are rational, we have a will, which moves us to seek that which is good, according as we know, or are persuaded, it to be such. And in this reasonable soul we find two kinds of perfection, which S. Augustine and, after him, all theologians have called the inferior and superior parts of

the soul: the inferior that which reasons and acts according to the arguments and experience of the senses; the superior that which reasons and acts according to the intellectual perceptions, and which is not actuated by the senses, but by spiritual causes. Accordingly, this superior part is called mind or spirit; and the inferior, sense, feeling, or human reason.

Again, this superior part of man may be ruled by two manner of lights,—one that natural light which has guided philosophers and men of science; the other a supernatural light, which guides Christians and theologians who found their arguments upon faith and revelation,—still more those who are led by even more directly heavenly inspiration. So S. Augustine says that it is by that superior part that we cleave to and obey the Eternal Law of God.

Jacob suffering Benjamin to go down into Egypt under extreme necessity,¹ though against his wish, is an illustration of the two wills,—the inferior which grudged to let him go, and the superior which resolved to send him; the inferior will, which was founded on Jacob's desire to avoid separation from his son, yielding to the superior, which sought to provision his family. It was the inferior man in Abraham which asked mistrustfully, "Shall a child be born unto him which is an hundred years old?"² and the superior which "believed in God; and He counted it to him for righteousness."³ The inferior again shrank from sacrificing Isaac, when Abraham was called on so to do, but the superior will resolved to do so heartily.

We daily experience these contrary wills. The father who sends his son to college or to court mourns at parting with him, though his higher will accepts what promotes his son's interest; the mother weeps as she blesses her newly-married daughter, although her superior will rejoices in her child's happiness. Yet there are not, as the Manichees affirmed, two souls or natures in man. Not so, S.

¹ Gen. xliii.

² Gen. xvii. 17.

³ Gen. xv. 6.

Augustine says;¹ but the will, when attracted by divers impulses, is divided and drawn hither and thither, until, following one or the other as it is free to do, the strongest will asserts its pre-eminence, only leaving behind the sense of struggle. Above all, our Saviour in His Humanity illustrates these superior and inferior wills; for, as all theologians know, He was wholly perfect from the moment He was conceived of the Blessed Virgin, nevertheless He was subject to sorrow and grief of heart; nor may we say that He suffered only in the body, or even in soul, in respect of the senses, for He Himself said, before any of His external sufferings, before even He was seized, "My Soul is sorrowful, even unto death."² And then He prayed that the cup might pass from Him, thereby displaying the desire of the inferior part of His Soul, when contemplating the bitterness of His Passion, to escape it; which petition He made to His Father: whence we see plainly that the inferior part of the soul is not identical with its sensitive nature, nor the lower will with the sensual appetite; for these are incapable of making a prayer or petition—acts of the reasoning faculty,—still less can they speak to God, Whom the senses cannot reach. But the Saviour, having shown that He experienced the lower will, and that it sought to shun suffering, displayed the superior will, by which, accepting the Father's decree, He voluntarily met death, and in spite of the lower will said, "Not My Will, but Thine be done."

¹ "Let them perish from Thy Presence, O God, as perish vain talkers and seducers of the soul, who . . . affirm that there are two minds in us of two kinds—one good, the other evil."—*Conf.* bk. viii. c. x.

² Matt. xxvi. 38.

CHAPTER XII.

*In these Two Parts of the Soul there are Four
different Degrees of Reason.*

THE Temple of Solomon had three courts,—the first for those Gentiles who came to worship God at Jerusalem; the second for the Israelites, male and female; the third for the Priests and Levites; and beyond all these was the Holy of Holies, into which the High Priest alone entered once in every year. Our reason, or soul, is the very temple of God, Who dwells therein. "I sought Thee without," S. Augustine says, "and found Thee not, because Thou wert within me." So in this mystic temple there are three courts, or different degrees of reason. The first leads us by the experience of sense, the second by human knowledge; the third by faith, and beyond all these there is an eminent, supreme point of spiritual perception, which is not led by the light of reason or argument, but by a simple act of the will, through which the mind yields and submits to God's Truth and Will.

Now, this culminating point of the soul or mind is aptly symbolised by the Sanctuary or Holy of Holies; for I. The Sanctuary had no windows whereby to admit light, and that mind needs no enlightening of words. II. All light entered by the door, and so into that mind faith alone enters, kindling like rays, the beauty and brightness of God's Good Pleasure. III. None entered save the High Priest, and this highest point of the soul is only approachable by a wide overpowering consciousness that the Divine Will must be loved and accepted, not here and there only, but in everything, general and special alike. IV. When the High Priest entered he darkened the doorway by the fumes of his censer, and even so the

soul is sometimes clouded by the renunciations of the soul, which cares not so much to define the beauty and goodness set forth as to embrace and worship them, and through absolute acceptance of God's Will to attain perfect union with Him. V. Lastly, the Ark of the Covenant was in the Sanctuary, and hard by the Tables of the Law, the manna in its golden pot, and Aaron's rod which budded and blossomed in one night. So in this highest point of the soul we find, (1) the light of faith, symbolised by the manna hidden in its pot, by which we assent to the truth of mysteries we cannot understand ; (2) the aid of hope, typified by Aaron's rod, by which we accept the promises of good things beyond our sight ; (3) the sweetness of holy charity, represented by God's Commandments, by which we unite our minds to that of God, of Which we are scarce conscious.

For although faith, hope, and charity shed their heavenly influence over all the soul's powers, mental or bodily, subjecting these to their rightful authority ; yet their special and natural abode is in this highest part of the soul, whence, like a fountain of living water, they flow through sundry channels into all faculties and parts. So then there are two departments in the superior part of the mind,—the one whence proceeds all that is of supernatural faith and light, the other the source of ordinary faith, hope, and charity. S. Paul was constrained by the two conflicting desires, to depart and be with Christ, and to abide in the flesh and win souls to Him.¹ Both desires assuredly came of his higher nature, since both were of love ; but his resolution to hold to the latter was not a matter of argument, but simply from seeing and feeling His Master's Will, and yielding to it in spite of all that argument might say to the contrary.

But if faith, hope, and charity are formed by this highest manner of acquiescence, whence is it that the lower mental faculty yet reasons and discusses their

¹ Phil. i. 23, 24.

teaching? It is even as with lawyers, who having disputed a point, and Parliament having decided the question, they yet discuss its various bearings, and the character of the decision; so the mind being fixed by the power of God's Grace, the understanding nevertheless is exercised upon the results of faith. And the pleadings of theology are made before the bar of the highest part of the soul, and it is its loftiest point which submits to the final decision. It is because the recognition of these four different degrees of the reasoning faculties is so necessary to the understanding of spiritual matters that I have dwelt thus at length upon the subject.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Different Kinds of Love.

LOVE is divided into two species: the love of benevolence, and of desire.¹

I. The latter is excited by the hope of pleasure to be acquired from the object loved; the former by our desire to promote the welfare of that object, rather than selfish gratification.

II. If the person loved already possesses all that

¹ "Bienveillance et convoitise."

"By desire I do not mean what theologians call the love of concupiscence, by which we all court God as our own ultimate end and Sovereign Good. . . . I mean the devotion which results in the heart from the two loves of complacency and benevolence. . . . It is wishing God more love, more obedience, more glory from men. It is desiring for Him, out of love, the augmentation of everything in heaven, earth, hell, and purgatory, on which His accidental love can feed and be increased. . . . It is wishing that sins might cease, and scandal disappear, and lukewarmness evaporate from the face of the earth; . . . it is wishing that every grain of the sea sands, and every leaf of the forests, had a seraph's intellect and voice to swell the chorus of His praise."—*All for Jesus*, p. 290.

is good, and we rejoice in his possession, then our love becomes the love of complaisance, which is really an act of the will, uniting itself to the pleasure or welfare of another. But if he whom we love does not yet possess such good, we desire it for him, and then our love becomes the love of desire.

III. When benevolent love is exercised without any response from the object loved, it is simply called the love of benevolence; when there is mutual correspondence, the love of friendship. Now, for mutual correspondence it is necessary that friends should love each other, know that they do so, and keep up intercourse and familiarity.

IV. If we merely love a friend, without preferring him to others, that is simple friendship; if we prefer him, our friendship becomes one of choice or selection.

V. If such selection be ordinary, it is called simple preference; but if we specially and greatly prefer one friend out of many others, then it is called a special preference.

VI. If our esteem and preference, however great, yet will bear any comparison with that which we feel for others, it may be called a special preference; but if it be immeasurably above all else, bearing no comparison with any other, then it becomes a sovereign, supreme preference, or, in a word, it is that love which we owe to the One God. In familiar language the words *dear*, *dearly*, to become *dear*, indicate a certain price or value; and just as in common parlance the word *man* (strictly speaking indicative of human beings generally) has been appropriated to the male sex as the superior, and *adoration* is almost limited in its application to God as its worthiest object, so the word CHARITY is reserved for the Love of God, as our supreme, sovereign affection.

CHAPTER XIV.

Charity synonymous with Love.

ORIGEN says somewhere that for fear the word *love* should excite evil thoughts in the weak, as signifying rather a carnal than a spiritual affection, therefore Holy Scripture employs the words *charity* and *dilection* as purer. S. Augustine, on the contrary, with a riper knowledge of God's Word, clearly shows that the word LOVE is no less pure than *dilection*; and that both alike are used to signify a holy affection as well as at times a depraved passion, to which end he cites various passages of Scripture. But S. Denys speaks more favourably of the word *love*, saying that the apostles and first disciples (the only theologians he wot of) preferred it to *dilection*, in order to correct those who used it in a profane or carnal sense; and although they held both words to mean the same thing, some looked upon LOVE as more appropriate to God than *dilection*: thus, *e.g.*, the holy Ignatius wrote, "My love is crucified." And as these earliest theologians used the word *love* in things divine, to cleanse it from a shadow of impurity in the world's imagination, so they used the word *dilection* (or *delight*) to express human affections, as being free from all question of sensuality: *e.g.*, S. Denys quotes some one as saying, "Thy delight has pierced my soul, as the delight of women." The word LOVE represents more fervour, warmth, and energy than *dilection*; and in Latin *dilectione* conveys much less than *love*. A great orator says, "Clodius bears to me a great *dilectione*, or, to speak more truly, he loves me." And thus the title of LOVE as chiefest is rightly given to charity, as to the chiefest and highest of loves; and therefore it is that I have called this little book a treatise OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

CHAPTER XV.

The Adaptation between God and Man.

SO soon as man dwells with any attention on the thought of the Divinity, he experiences a tender emotion which testifies that God is the God of the heart of man ; nor does the understanding ever find such satisfaction as in this thought, the merest shadow of which (says the prince of philosophers) is more precious than whatever else is greatest, as the faintest ray of sunshine is brighter than moon and stars together. If man's heart be overcome with fear, it instinctively turns to God, thus acknowledging that when all else is adverse He is Good, and that He Alone can save us in peril.

This satisfaction and reliance can only spring from the adaptation between God's Goodness and the soul, a mighty but hidden adaptation, which all know to exist but few comprehend, which cannot be denied nor yet penetrated. We are created in the Image and Likeness of God : what is that to say but that we are adapted to His Divine Majesty ? The soul is spiritual, invisible, immortal ; it understands, wills, is able freely to judge, argue, know, and be virtuous ; in all which it is like to God. It dwells in the whole body and in every separate part thereof, even as God is in the whole world and its every part. Man knows and cherishes himself by the acts of his understanding and will, which, separate as they are in their source, are inseparably combined in the soul. Even so the Son proceeds from the Father, as His Word ; and the Holy Ghost, as Love proceeding ; each Person distinct in Himself, and from the Father, yet all Three inseparable and united, One Only, Indivisible Godhead, Their Glory Equal, Their Majesty Co-eternal.

But beyond this resemblance there is a marvellous correspondence between God and man to the perfect-

ing of both. Not that God can receive anything of man, but because just as man can only be perfected by Divine Goodness, so It can in nowise employ Its perfection so fitly as with respect to our humanity. The one has an infinite need and capacity, the other an infinite power and readiness to give. Nothing is so welcome to poverty as ample liberality; nothing more welcome to the rich and liberal heart than want to be relieved; and while the greater the riches of a benevolent person the more he longs to overflow upon others, so the more urgent a man's needs the more he craves for the void to be filled. Thus riches and poverty blend happily, and it were hard to say to which with most satisfaction, if our Lord had not told us that it is more blessed to give than to receive; whence we may infer that God's Goodness rejoices even more in bestowing His graces on us than we in receiving them.

The Bride cried out, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Mouth."¹ But is there sufficient correspondence between Bride and Bridegroom for such union? "Thy Love is better than wine," she goes on to say. New wine ferments and cannot be contained, but the Bridegroom's Love is yet stronger in its fervour; it is "sweeter than all spices." We need the outpouring of Divine abundance in our barrenness and want; but He only needs us through the very excess of His Goodness and Abundance, even as the mother needs that her infant's lips should draw forth the milk which in its abundance oppresses her breasts. Surely then, seeing that nothing in this world can fully satisfy the soul, that the mind always craves to know more, and the will to attain some greater good, it may well cry out that it is not made for this world; that there is a Sovereign Power on Which it hangs, a Supreme Maker Who has imparted this boundless desire to know, this insatiable craving; and that therefore it can only tend and strive ceaselessly to be united to Him Whose it is wholly! This is our true adaptation to God.

¹ Cant. i. 2.

CHAPTER XVI.

We have a Disposition to love God above all Things.

IF there were a man existing in that original uprightness in which Adam was first created, he would, without any further aid than that which God imparts to all His creatures, incline to love Him above all else, and readily succeed in doing so. For just as the Great Creator has given fire the impulse to rise heavenwards, and water to flow to the sea, even so He has implanted in man's heart a special natural tendency not merely to love that which is generally good, but specially His Heavenly Goodness, the best of all good things; and were there a man on earth so blessed as I have imagined, God would of His Sovereign Goodness inevitably give him all such aid as was needful to carry out his inclination. Such aid would be on the one hand natural, inasmuch as God is Sovereign Master of nature; and on the other supernatural, inasmuch as it would correspond, not to man's ordinary nature, but to a nature enriched with original righteousness, a supernatural quality issuing forth from God's special Grace. Meanwhile the love which such a man would expend upon ordinary objects would be natural, and his higher love of which we speak would tend to God Alone, according as He is the recognised Lord and Final End of all creation, even of human perceptions, and consequently to be loved above all things, even according to natural tendency or inclination.

Now, although our human nature has fallen from the original righteousness in which man was created, and is grievously wounded by sin, nevertheless that holy inclination to love God above all things abides, as also that natural light by which we recognise His Sovereign Goodness as to be loved beyond all things; and no man can think stedfastly upon God, even by his

natural light, without feeling some drawings of love excited in his innermost heart by the hidden tendencies of nature, which stimulate the mind to find rest in Him as its First and Ruling Cause.

The partridge is apt to steal its neighbours' eggs, whether from stupidity or a craving to hatch a larger brood I know not ; but anyhow it is a fact, that when the young bird hears the call of his real mother, it invariably leaves the foster-bird and follows her : led by a hidden sympathy, dormant until, on meeting its object, it is suddenly called forth, and the bird returns to its first claim. Even so with our heart : it may be brought up amid low, transitory things, beneath the wings of nature, so to say ; but the first glance it turns upon God, the first token from Him it receives, will rouse its first natural tendency towards Him, and the spark, bursting forth as from ashes, will touch the will and kindle a flame of that supreme love which is due to the First Cause and Lord of All.

CHAPTER XVII.

Nature alone cannot love God in all Things.

THE eagle is noble in heart and mighty on the wing ; but its vision is far more powerful than even its flight, and reaches farther. Even so our minds, though kindled with a natural tendency towards God, have more power to see how greatly He deserves love than strength of will to love Him, and that because sin has more terribly weakened our will than it has clouded our understanding ; and while that rebellion of the sensual appetite which we call concupiscence molests the intellect more or less, it chiefly excites the will to revolt ; and thus the infirm will, continually assaulted by concupiscence, cannot advance in Divine Love as reason and natural inclination would dispose it to do.

Ah! what glorious witness, not only to a deep knowledge of God, but to a powerful drawing towards Him, many great heathen philosophers have borne: Socrates, Plato, Trismegistus, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Seneca, Epictetus! Socrates, above all, clearly perceived the Unity of God, and was so disposed to love Him, that S. Augustine says many believed him to teach moral philosophy solely with a view to purify men's minds, and enable them the better to contemplate the One Sovereign Good, the Only God; while as to Plato, he stamps himself plainly by his celebrated definition of philosophy, *i.e.*, that it is neither more nor less than loving God, and that the true philosopher is he who loves God. And what need is there to enlarge upon Aristotle's profound assertions of the Unity of God and His Greatness?

But, nevertheless, these great minds, with all their knowledge of God and disposition to love Him, yet failed in strength and courage fitly to do so. "The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead," says S. Paul; "so that they are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."¹ They glorified Him after a fashion, but not as He ought to be glorified, for they had not courage to overthrow idolatry, but in S. Paul's words they "held the truth in unrighteousness,"² and preferring their own ease to God's honour, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."³ One can but mourn over Plato's account of the death of Socrates, and how he spoke of *the gods*, as though there were many, when he knew so well there was One Only; or over Mercurius Trismegistus in his cowardly lament over the abolition of idolatry, he who had spoken so fittingly of the True God. And above all I grieve to note Epictetus, who at times speaks of God with such force and feeling

¹ Rom. i. 20, 21.² Rom. i. 18.³ Rom. i. 22.

that you might take him for a Christian meditating deeply, at another time calling upon the heathen gods !

Verily our feeble, sin-laden nature is like a palm tree grown in this country, which bears a mere semblance of fruit, the real ripe date being only the produce of warmer lands. Even so the human heart produces some attempts at love, but full love springs up only in those hearts which are inspired and fostered by heavenly grace and perfect charity ; and that imperfect, barren, human effort is, so to say, an "impotent" will, which perceives the pool of healing¹ but has not strength to enter, devoid as it is of the generous vigour which is needed to prefer God above all else. S. Paul describes this mental attitude, saying, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not."²

CHAPTER XVIII.

Our natural Inclination to love God is not without its Use.

IF then we cannot by nature prefer God to all else, why are we naturally inclined so to do ? Is it not purposeless to incite us to a love to which we cannot attain ? Why should we thirst for this precious water of life, since we cannot quench that thirst ?

God is very Good. Our treacherous disobedience deserved the loss of all that favour He testified towards human nature when He lifted up the light of His Countenance upon it,³ and disposed it to be the recipient of His Infinite Goodness. But He could not deal harshly with the work of His Own Hands ; "He considered that we were but flesh, and even as a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again,"⁴ and thus in His Mercy He would not altogether cast us away, nor

¹ John v. 2, 3.

³ Ps. iv. 7.

² Rom. vii. 18.

⁴ Ps. lxxviii. 40.

deprive us of all token of His Grace ; leaving us this inclination to love Him, so that none might be tempted to say, " Who will show us any good ?"¹ For although a mere natural inclination is not enough to attain the blessing of a due love of God, yet if that be faithfully used, God's Grace will enable us to go on further ; and as we act up to what is given His Fatherly Mercy will supply more and more, till we attain that Sovereign Love to which we are called, since nothing is surer than that God's Goodness never fails those who are faithful in such small matters as they can control.

So then our natural inclination to love God above all things is not profitless. God uses it to draw us nearer to Himself, and to hold us like birds in a net, and it is a token and remembrance to us of our First Cause and our Creator, and of our duty to Him. Of old, when a stag was taken by some monarch and let loose again in the forest, it was the custom to put a collar on it, bearing the royal arms, or legend, in token that it was his for ever :—thus we read of a stag which was found three hundred years after Cæsar's death bearing a collar with the inscription, " Cæsar loosed me."

Even so, the tending to God which He has implanted in our souls, sets forth to friend and foe, not merely that we originally were His, but also that, while giving us the use of free-will, we yet belong to Him, and that He retains the right to recall us to our own salvation, as His Holy and Gracious Providence sees fit. And so David not only speaks of the " light" of His Countenance, but says, " Thou hast put gladness in my heart ;"² because we may fairly hope and believe that He Who has thus stamped us with the token of our origin desires and purposes to reclaim us from amid all our wanderings, if we will but yield ourselves up to His Heavenly Goodness.

¹ Ps. iv. 6.

² Ps. iv. 7.

BOOK II.

THE ORIGIN OF DIVINE LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

God's Perfection is Manifold yet One.

WHEN the sun rises red and turbid, or sets pale and watery, we say there will be rain. Yet in truth the sun is not subject to any such changeableness, and its light is invariable and perpetual; the appearances which alter its brightness are but those mists and clouds of earth which rise up before our mortal sight.

Even so with God: we are wont to speak of Him not as He really is, but according as we behold Him through the mists of our earthly vision. We speak as though He possessed various qualities and characteristics; we talk of His Justice, His Mercy, His Omnipotence, His Truth, His Wisdom. Yet, verily, there is no variation in God, He is One sole, uniform Perfection; whatever is in Him is but Himself, and the many qualities which we define in Him are Unity. Just as the sun has but one clear brightness infinitely beyond all the colours we attribute to it, a brightness which in reality gives them their manifold hues, so God is One All-prevailing Excellence, far above all our notions of perfection, and imparting whatever perfectness is to be found in all such perfection. Nor is it within compass of anything created, whether human or angelic, fitly to name this Supreme Excellence; even as we are told in the Apocalypse that "He has a Name, which no man

knew but He Himself.”¹ And so the Fathers have said that there is no real theologian save God, inasmuch as none can truly know the Infinite Greatness of His Divine Perfection nor fitly speak of it save Himself. So when Manoah asked the Angel of the Lord His Name, God answered, “Why askest thou thus after My Name, seeing it is secret?”² as though He said, “My Name is to be worshipped, but it cannot be spoken of creatures, or comprehended save of Myself.” Our mental faculty is too frail to conceive such boundless Excellence, comprising as it does all possible excellences in a supreme eminence to which human thought cannot reach. Therefore, in speaking of God we are obliged to use many terms to convey any idea; we call Him Good, Wise, Powerful, Immortal, and the like. And so He is: He is indeed all that, because He is infinitely more; He is so Excellent above all excellence that all possible perfections are contained in Him.

The manna with which Israel was fed was “able to content every man’s delight, and agreeing to every taste,”³ combining the flavour of all other food; and yet it were truer to say that it was none of these, but a flavour essentially its own, containing whatever is pleasant and grateful in all else: or the herb *Dodecatheos*, which Pliny says can cure all maladies, and though it be none of the drugs we know, yet combines the virtues of all other medicaments. Even so the boundless measure of God’s Perfection, so perfect above all perfection that none save Himself can fathom it.

“When ye glorify the Lord, exalt Him as much as ye can; for even yet will He far exceed; and when ye exalt Him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary, for ye can never go far enough.”⁴ “He is greater than our heart.”⁵

“All ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye

¹ Rev. xix. 12.

² Judges xiii. 18.

³ Wisd. xvi. 20.

⁴ Eccclus. xliii. 30.

⁵ 1 John iii. 20.

the Lord;" our highest praise being the confession that we cannot duly praise Him, and that His Name is so far above all other names that we cannot worthily tell it out!

CHAPTER II.

God's Sole Action is His Divinity.

WE possess sundry faculties, and hence proceed various actions and their results. We see, hear, taste, touch, move, will, understand; and so we walk, talk, sing, etc. But it is not so with God, His Perfection is Simple and Infinite, and it is one sole and purely simple Act—even His Own Divine Essence, Eternal, Unchanging. Yet by reason of our frail and feeble comprehension we are forced to speak of Him as though He were daily performing a multiplicity of actions; and that because we can only understand or speak according to the measure of what we ourselves experience. Among created things nought can be done save by a variety of action; and so, when we behold the innumerable results of Divine Power, we are unable to separate from them the idea of action, and we speak according to our own apprehension. Nor is this altogether wrong, for although God is but One supremely Divine Act, that Act is so perfect that it comprehends all whatsoever makes up the measure of perfection.

God spake one word, and sun, moon and stars, with all their countless varieties of motion and attraction, were made.¹ One word plenished the air with birds, the sea with fish, and the earth with animal life and vegetation. The inspired historian, condescending to our weakness, gives the word "FIAT;" but David says that it was "the breath of His Mouth,"² that is one act of His Divine Will, which produced the infinite

¹ Ps. cxlviii. 5.

² Ps. xxxiii. 6.

variety of creation ; so infinite that we are constrained to think of the Power Which created it as multiplied, although in reality it is One only. S. Chrysostom observes, that while Moses describes the creation at length, S. John expresses it in one word :¹ "All things were made by Him,"² *i.e.*, the Word, the Son of God.

This Word then, One only, produces all variety ; Itself unvarying, effects all changes ; Itself Eternal, gives order, succession, time, and season to all things.

A painter, undertaking to represent the Nativity, spends days and months upon his picture, elaborating it with countless touches ; but watch the engraver taking impressions of that same picture,—how, laying his blank paper upon the plate, one stroke does the work, and the finished representation, however various the objects, is before you at once. Even so nature, like the painter, multiplies actions and efforts, and slowly produces the desired effect ; but God gave being to all creation, past, present, and future, by one act of His Sovereign Will ; all in perfect harmony and order amid the variety, for the Singleness of God's Will is opposed to confusion and disorder. Thus all creation is called the Universe, because of the Unity of its conception, and because it is One in many, many in One.

Briefly, God's Unity creates diversity, His unchanging Eternity calls forth the vicissitudes of creation ; in token of which God having said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night ; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years ;"³ we yet experience this ceaseless round of seasons, which will endure to the end of the world, even as the Eternal Will of God abides from age to age, in all that has been or ever will be ; for without that Will nothing was made that is made. To Him be all glory and honour. Amen.

¹ ἐγένετο.

² John i. 3.

³ Gen. i. 14.

CHAPTER III.

Of Divine Providence.

WE see, then, that God does not need multiplied action, since one single act of His Omnipotent Will can suffice for all the endless variety of His Works. But we are constrained to speak of that Power according to the measure which our puny minds are capable of apprehending ; and therefore, in considering God's Providence, we will take the reign of Solomon as an illustration of good government.

That great monarch, being taught of God that the commonwealth depends upon religion as the body on the soul, regulated alike all that was needful for the confirmation both of religion and the commonwealth. He determined to build a Temple of fixed dimensions, containing such and such courts and porches, served by so many sacrificers and officials ; he planned a royal house for himself, placing therein certain officers, appointing judges and magistrates to secure the people's welfare ; and further regulated his powerful army, with its two hundred and fifty chieftains, forty thousand horses, and all the other details which we read of in Holy Scripture. Then, having planned all this, he began the work of providing, reckoning mentally all that would be needed to build the Temple, maintain its ministers, as also his court and army ; proceeding to send to Hiram, King of Tyre, for timber of cedar and of fir,¹ and trading with many far-off lands, Ophir, Tharshish, etc., so as to gather together all things needful for his undertaking. Neither did he stop there ; for having duly considered what was required, he appointed all the necessary officials, and so well organised their work and their maintenance, that by wise ruling he carried out his intentions. And

¹ 1 Kings v.

forasmuch as no arrangements are of avail without a sustained system, which is the very heart of all good government, we may fitly call Solomon's government a continuous providence.

To turn to spiritual things. God in His Foreknowledge having designed to create the world, prepared all things fitly to His Own Glory ; both angelic and human natures, the various orders of the hierarchy which Scripture speaks of, and the diverse characters we find among men. Further, He considered and disposed all those means required by the angels and men He was about to create to carry out the ends for which He destined them. Nor did He stop there ; He created them, and supplied them with all needful for reasonable creatures to attain to glory ; so that practically His Sovereign Providence is the Act by which God provides whatever men or angels need to reach their due aim. But because these means are various we speak of a natural and a supernatural Providence, and again we subdivide this last into general and special providence.

A word as to God's natural Providence. Through it He has provided man with the animal and vegetable creation, and for their benefit He has ordained the course of seasons, winds, and rain ; and both for man's good and that of the inferior creation He has ruled the heavenly planets, and ordained a system of reciprocal service between all creatures. Thus the horse serves us and we tend him, the sheep feeds and clothes us and we pasture it, the earth sends up mist and the clouds drop down fatness on the earth, the hand ministers to the foot, the foot to the hand. Who can contemplate the all-prevailing adaptation of all nature, each to each, and not cry out, "Thy Providence, O Father, governeth it!"¹ Thus God's Providence reaches all things, reigns over and turns all things to

¹ Wisd. xiv. 3. This subject is carried out at length by S. Basil, S. Ambrose, Louis of Grenada and Richeome, in whose works the devout soul may study it further.

His Glory. There may be casualties and unforeseen accidents, but they are unforeseen only to us, foreseen and foreordained of God to the welfare of the world He made. Such unforeseen accidents arise from the concurrence of sundry causes, which not having any natural connection, act separately, and so their combination results in something unexpected to our calculations, though each has borne its natural part in producing that result. Take as an illustration the poet *Æschylus*, who having been told by an augur that he would be killed by the fall of a house, remained all day in the open plain to escape his destiny, and who while abiding there was killed by the fall of a tortoise on his bald head, an eagle letting the reptile fall upon what doubtless it supposed to be a rock, in order to break the shell. Assuredly this was a fortuitous accident; the man went to the fields not to die, but to escape death; and the bird sought to break the tortoise' shell, not the poet's skull, yet it fell out the other way, the tortoise lived and poor *Æschylus* died. According to our views the thing was an unhappy chance, but in God's Providence it was an act of justice by which the man's superstition was avenged.

The history of Joseph is full of startling vicissitudes. His brethren who had sold him were afraid lest he should requite them all the evil they had done him; but he saw that what the world called chance or accident was God's Providence, and said, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God;"¹ "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good."² Even so with all things, even what the world esteems most noxious, which do but relieve and bring out that which is excellent, like the shadows in a picture.

¹ Gen. xlv. 8.

² Gen. l. 20.

CHAPTER IV.

God's Supernatural Providence over Man.

WE know that whatsoever God does is designed for the good of men and angels, but so far as our human weakness is able to understand the order of His Providence as revealed in Holy Scripture it seems to be this :

God proposed from all eternity to make countless creatures of various quality and perfection, to which He would impart Himself ; and seeing that in no way could this be done so excellently as by uniting Himself to a created nature, and that it should be, so to say, grafted into the Divine Nature, and one with It, His Infinite Goodness saw good so to effect it, that as there is an essential communication in God, by which the Father imparts all His Infinite and Indivisible Godhead to the Son, and the Father and the Son together impart Their Godhead to the Holy Spirit, Who is of Them both,¹ so this Sovereign Grace was communicated in such perfection to a creature, that created nature and Divine Nature, each retaining its specialty, were nevertheless so united as to be one Person.

And amid all creation it pleased Omnipotence to select that human nature which thereafter received the inconceivable dignity of being taken by God the Son, and which by union with God was admitted to share the riches of His Infinite Glory. Nor did the Creator limit His Goodness to the Person of His Son, but shed it forth upon other creatures, and formed men and angels, that they might share His Grace and Glory, and worship and adore Him for ever. And inasmuch as it pertained to God to bring forth His Son's Humanity after sundry fashions, calling it forth out of nothing, or out of some existing creation, as Adam

¹ Athan. Creed

and Eve, or by ordinary generation, or by extraordinary generation, He was pleased to choose the latter, and to choose from all created women the Blessed Virgin, by means of whom the Saviour of souls was to be not merely man, but a child of human race. Furthermore, God's Providence was pleased to create all else, natural and supernatural, with respect to the Saviour, so that men and angels might share His Glory by serving Him ; and thus He endowed them all with free-will, complete liberty to choose good or evil, making all in original righteousness, which was indeed but that sweet love which disposed and led all to eternal bliss.

But forasmuch as Infinite Wisdom was pleased so to commingle this original love with His creatures' will, that it should be absolutely free, He foresaw that a part (though but a small one) of angelic nature would deliberately forsake holy love and lose their glory. And because this could not be save by deliberate malice, without any excusing reason or motive, and that by far the greater part would abide stedfast, God having set forth His Mercy in creating the angels, was pleased to set forth His Justice and the power of His wrath by forsaking those treacherous beings who departed from Him in their rebellion. God likewise foresaw that the first man would abuse his free-will, and, forsaking grace, would fall ; but He was pleased to deal less severely with human nature than with the angels. He purposed to unite that human nature with His Own Divinity ; He knew it to be "even as a wind that passeth away and cometh not again." He considered the deceit and temptation with which Satan overthrew man, that all the human race would perish by the fault of one, and He had pity on our nature, and dealt mercifully with it. But that mercy might be tempered with justice, He saw fit to save man by a strict redemption ; and as that could only be done by His Son, He ordained that He should redeem men, not merely by some act of love which might have

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 40.

sufficed to purchase the salvation of millions of worlds, but by countless acts of love and suffering in His Life, and by death upon the Cross; willing Him thus to share our weakness that so we might share His Glory, thus setting forth His "plenteous redemption,"¹ overflowing, boundless as it is, which has restored to us all that is necessary to attain to glory, so that none can ever complain that Divine Mercy is lacking to any.

CHAPTER V.

God's Providence has provided a Plenteous Redemption for Man.

WHILE speaking of God's willing one thing primarily and another after, I merely use human forms of speech, since whatever He does is by one all-powerful act, in which nevertheless are contained as much order and consecutive action as though His intention and will were manifold. And since out of several existing objects every reasonable will must prefer that which is most loveable, it was in the natural order of things that the Sovereign Providence preferred above all else the chiefest object of love, our Saviour, and other creatures in their order after Him, according as they more or less nearly appertained to His Glory and Worship.

Thus all was done for the Son of God, of Whom it is said that He is "the Firstborn of every creature . . . all things were created by Him that are created . . . and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the Body the Church . . . that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."²

Men plant a vine for the sake of its fruit, and although the leaves appear first the fruit is the real object. Even so the Great Saviour was first in the Divine Mind and the design of God's Providence

¹ Ps. cxxx. 7.

² Col. i. 15-18.

in creating the vine of the universe, and its succession of the generations of leaves and flowers which were to precede the Desired Fruit, whence comes that "wine that maketh glad the heart of man."¹

Who then could question the largeness of our salvation, considering this our Mighty Saviour, for Whom we are made, and by Whose merits we are redeemed? He died for all, because all were dead, and His Mercy was more effectual to redeem than Adam's sin to lose mankind. So far from that sin repulsing Divine Pity, it did but kindle and excite it; the presence of a foe roused it up, and gathering itself for victory, so to say, there, "where sin abounded grace did much more abound;"² in which spirit the Church cries out on Easter Eve: "O needful sin of Adam, which the death of Christ has atoned! O blessed fault, which merited such and so great a Redeemer!"³

Of a truth we might have said with one of old, "We were lost, had we not been lost;" that is, our loss has turned to gain, in that human nature has received greater grace in the Redemption of the Saviour than it could ever have had by Adam, had he kept his innocence. For though Divine Providence has left traces of judgment mingled with mercy, as, *e.g.*, death, sickness, labour, rebellious sensual impulses, yet God's Love overrides all this, and turns these troubles to the greater good of those that love Him: patience is born of labour, contempt of the world from the inevitableness of death, victory from concupiscence. Even so as the rainbow touching the prickly aspalathus makes it sweeter than the lily, so our Lord's Redemption, when it comes in contact with our infirmities, turns them to a value which original innocence could not have had. "There shall be joy in heaven over one

¹ Ps. civ. 15.

² Rom. v. 20.

³ See the Breviary Office for the Benediction of the Easter torch: "O certe necessarium Adæ peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est! O felix culpa, quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!"

sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance," our Lord says.¹ Even so the state of redemption is a hundred times more precious than innocence. Washed by Christ's Blood with the hyssop of the Cross, we have been cleansed to a whiteness far whiter than innocence, issuing, Naaman-like, from the healing river cleaner than if we had known no stain.² Thus God's Grace fulfils the precept given us, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."³ His "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment,"⁴ and "His Mercy is over all His works."⁵

CHAPTER VI.

The special Favours bestowed in the Redemption of Man by God's Providence.

MARVELLOUSLY as God has displayed His boundless power and riches in nature, He has shown forth a yet more wondrous magnificence in His works of Grace towards us. Not content, in the abundance of His Mercy, with giving man a universal redemption, by means of which every one may be saved, He has yet further magnified His gifts by their endless variety. First of all in grace the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, that King's daughter whose "clothing is of gold wrought about with divers colours,"⁶ foremost of those whom He will set on His right Hand in Glory. And then follow others to whom He imparted marvellous favour;—S. John Baptist, the Prophet Jeremiah, with many more, who for a time were left in danger of growing cold in love, yet were favoured with special grace for their salvation: *e.g.*, the Apostles, David, Magdalene, and others, who for a season were without the pale of God's

¹ Luke xv. 7.

⁴ James ii. 13.

² 2 Kings v. 14.

⁵ Ps. cxlv. 9.

³ Rom. xii. 21.

⁶ Ps. xlv. 14.

Love, but who, when once converted, were confirmed in grace to the end, so that, although subject to certain imperfections, they were yet free from all mortal sin, and consequently from the peril of losing Divine Love; who were as the friends of the Bridegroom, clothed with the wedding garment of His Love, but not crowned; for inasmuch as their early life had been given to earthly love, they were not capable of wearing the crown of heavenly love: nevertheless to them the wedding garment sufficed, rendering them meet for the bridal feast of the Divine Bridegroom, and for eternal blessedness with Him.

CHAPTER VII.

The marvellous Variety of Graces which God vouchsafes to Men in His Providence.

GOD'S Eternal Providence bestowed special favour on the Blessed Virgin, "the mother of fair love,"¹ and in a lesser degree on some others; and next, His Sovereign Goodness poured out a stream of graces and blessings on men and angels, who have all been refreshed with the rain He sends "upon the just and on the unjust,"² who have all been sharers of "the True Light Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,"³ who have all received that seed which falls not only on good ground, but on stony places and thorns,⁴ so that none have any excuse if they fail to use the abounding riches of redemption to their own salvation.

Yet while this abundant outpouring of grace is given to all human nature, it is so various in kind that we scarce know which to admire most, its greatness or its variety. Who but must perceive how much more is given to Christians than to heathen, or how among

¹ Ecclus. xxiv. 18.

² Matt. v. 45.

³ John i. 9.

⁴ Matt. xiii.

Christians some are more favoured in circumstance than others? and who but will grant that all such external means of grace come of God's Mercy, and greatly promote internal progress? We never find any two men precisely similar in natural gifts, neither are any precisely alike in such as are supernatural. S. Augustine and the great Doctor S. Thomas tell us that the angels received varying degrees of grace,—each separate from the other according to their natural condition: and so with men,—God in the wealth of His creative power has made that endless variety which forms the rich enamel of which the Church sings on the festivals of her Confessor Bishops; "In glory was there none like unto him."¹ And even as in Heaven "no man knoweth the new name saving he that receiveth it,"²—each one among the blessed having his own, according to the glory wherein he dwells;—even so on earth each receives his own special grace, so special that no two are precisely similar. Thus our Lord compares His Grace to pearls,³ of which Pliny says that one of their choicest beauties is that each has so much its own characteristics that no two are perfectly alike. Again, even as "one star differeth from another star in glory,"⁴ so men will differ from each other in glory, just as they have differed in degrees of grace. And this variety in grace, and grace in variety, form a most holy and sweet harmony, making glad the Heavenly City of Jerusalem.

But we must beware of too closely inquiring wherefore God has imparted a grace to one rather than to another, or why He lavishes His favours on one side more than on another. Never indulge such curiosity; for since all have enough, nay, a superabundance for their salvation, what right has any man to murmur if God is pleased to bestow a larger measure of His grace on some than on others? We should count him foolish who should question why God makes

¹ Eccclus. xlv. 19.

³ Matt. xiii. 46.

² Rev. ii. 17.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 41.

the melon larger than the strawberry, the lily than the violet ; why the rosemary is not a rose, the pink not a pansy, why the peacock has more beauty than the bat, or why the fig is sweet and the lemon sharp. We should tell him, that inasmuch as for beauty there must be variety in the world, it must needs be that perfections should vary, that one thing cannot be another, and that there must be little and great, bitter and sweet, more and less of shapeliness and grace. And just so it is in things supernatural : the Holy Spirit tells us that "every man hath his proper gift of God ;"¹ and it is mere childishness to ask why S. Paul had not S. Peter's gifts ; why Anthony was not Athanasius, or Athanasius Jerome. To all such questioning we can but reply that the Church is as a garden diapered with infinite variety of flowers, which must needs be of all colours, shapes, and scents ; each possessed of its own intrinsic grace and beauty, and all combined into an enamel of very exquisite beauty and perfection.

CHAPTER VIII.

How greatly God desires our Love.

WHILE our Saviour's Redemption is applied to us in as many different ways as there are souls to be saved, still love is the one universal channel of redemption, without which it can never be applied. And so the gates of this earthly paradise were kept by the cherubim with the flaming sword, that we might learn how there is no entrance into the Heavenly Paradise save to him who is transfixed by the sword of Love. Therefore it is that the Dear Lord Who bought us with His Blood so greatly desires that we love Him in order to our eternal salvation ; and that we attain that eternal salvation so as to love Him

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 7.

eternally ; His Love effecting our salvation, that salvation His Love. " I am come to send fire on the earth ; and what will I, if it be already kindled."¹

Again, He enjoins this love upon us, saying, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."² See how the Heart of God craves our love ! Surely it had been much had He suffered us to love Him, even as Laban suffered Jacob to love and labour for Rachel ! But He goes much further, and bids us love Him with all our might, lest perchance the sight of His Majesty and our frailty should raise up a barrier, and keep us from Him ; whereby He testifies that He has not given us for nought a natural inclination to love Him, urging us, as He thus does by universal precept, to foster that inclination, to which end He gives power to every living soul.

As the natural sunshine vivifies all things with its warmth, and with its universal love stimulates them to bring forth after their kind, so the sunshine of God's Love kindles every soul, and draws it to Himself. " Wisdom crieth without ; she uttereth her voice in the streets : she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates : in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity ? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn you at My reproof : behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you."³ " It goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."⁴ And again that Wisdom speaks by the Prophet Ezekiel : " As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that he turn from his way and live."⁵ And to live to God is to love ; for he that loveth not abideth in death. How greatly then does God desire that we love Him !

¹ Luke xii. 49.

² Matt. xxii. 37, 38.

³ Prov. i. 20-24.

⁴ Ps. xix. 6.

⁵ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Nor does He stop short in thus generally calling us to love Him ; yet more, He stands at the door of each human heart and knocks, promising that "if any man hear My Voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him,"¹ that is, will admit him to the closest familiarity. What does all this prove but that God gives us not merely means sufficient to love Him and be saved, but that it is a rich, overflowing sufficiency, such as one might look for from such boundless Goodness as His.

S. Paul says, speaking to the persistent sinner, "Despisest thou the riches of His Goodness and forbearance and long-suffering ; not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath."² Thus God is not content merely to provide wherewithal to convert the perverse, but lavishes the richness of His Goodness to that end. Observe the antithesis which the Apostle draws between the riches of God's Goodness and the treasured stores of the impenitent heart, so rich in wrath (or sin) that it dares to despise the riches of compassion with which God would lead it to repentance. And those not merely His general riches of goodness, but such as lead to repentance, which cannot be ignored.

Throughout Holy Scripture this rich, creative abundance of means, whereby God draws sinners to love Him, continually appears. He is not content merely to knock : "My Beloved put His Hand in the hole of the door,"³ so as to leave no means of entrance untried : He does not only preach repentance ; He cries aloud, He goes on crying, as though He could not repeat it often enough, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways and live ; why will ye die ?"⁴ He leaves nothing undone to testify that "His Mercy is over all His works,"⁵ that His Mercy "rejoiceth against judgment,"⁶

¹ Rev. iii. 20.

³ Cant. v. 4.

⁵ Ps. cxlv. 9.

² Rom. ii. 4, 5.

⁴ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

⁶ James ii. 13.

that "with Him is plenteous redemption,"¹ that His Love is Infinite, and that, as the Apostle says, "He is rich in Mercy,"² and therefore would have all men to be saved,³ "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."⁴

CHAPTER IX.

How God's Eternal Love draws our Hearts to love Him.

I HAVE loved thee with an Everlasting Love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel."⁵—words whereby God promised that the Coming Saviour should establish His new Kingdom in the Church, His virgin Bride, the "Israelite indeed."⁶ And it is clearly "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His Mercy He saved us;"⁷ by that Eternal Love and Pity which moved His Divine Providence to draw us to Himself; for no man can come to Christ the Son except the Father draw him.⁸

Aristotle tells us of certain birds which have such short and powerless legs and feet that they are as though they had none; and once on the ground, they cannot take flight of themselves, or rise up again into the air; but lie grovelling, and even die where they lie, unless some gust of wind chance to take them, in which case, if they make use thereof and spread their wings, it will raise them and speed their flight.

Now we may liken the angels to those rare birds of Paradise which are never seen on earth save dead; for these heavenly beings could not quit Divine Love to seek self without falling into endless death (for we read that even as death separates man for

¹ Ps. cxxx. 7.

² Eph. ii. 4.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

⁵ Jer. xxxi. 3, 4.

⁶ John i. 47.

⁷ Titus iii. 5.

⁸ John vi. 44.

ever from this life, so their fall cut off the angels for ever from eternal life); but human beings such as we are more aptly represented by the other. So often as we dare to leave the upper air of holy love for earth and its attachments (as we do whensoever we displease God), we sink down to death; yet not such utter death but that some slender power of action remains, with which we may faintly struggle yet to love. Yet is this power so feeble that we have no strength ourselves to cast off sin, or to take wing again towards that holy blessedness which in our faithlessness we have voluntarily quitted. Surely we deserve to be forsaken of God after such disloyalty! but His Eternal Love restrains His Justice, and inspires His Pity to help us out of our misery; which He does by the Breath of His Holy Spirit, Which raises our heart from the dust and enables it to take flight once more in the atmosphere of Divine Love.

Now this first movement which God stirs in our heart is in us, but not of us; it comes without any effort or thought of ours, for "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God;"¹ Who not only loved us before we came into being, but willed us to become holy; to which end He "prevents us with the blessings of His Fatherly Goodness,"² and moves us to repentance and conversion. Think upon the Chief of the Apostles, heavy with his sin, in the sad night of his Master's Passion:³ he had no more thought of repentance than if he had never known his Saviour, but had lain grovelling like a miserable wretch, never to rise, had not the shrill cry of that instrument of God's Providence, the cock, pierced his dulled hearing.

At the same moment his Dear Lord, casting the healing glance of His Love upon him, pierced his hard heart, whence issued forth such torrents, even as

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

² Ps. xxi. 3.

³ "Voyez le pauvre Prince des Apostres tout engourdi dans son péché, en la triste nuit de la Passion de son Maître."

the rock of old, smitten by Moses in the desert.¹ Or again, behold the same great Apostle sleeping in the prison, bound with chains. This time he is a martyr, yet nevertheless he may well be a type of man sleeping, bound by sin, Satan's prisoner. Who then shall deliver him! Behold the Angel of the Lord smites him on the side, and calls him, saying, "Arise up quickly."² Even so the Spirit of God smites the sinner's heart, and rouses him to come forth from his iniquity. Does not all such rousing and kindling of the soul to better things come of God? is it not all done in and for us? We are roused, but we did not rouse ourselves; the Spirit of God roused us, and to this end it moved us. "I sleep, but my Heart (*i.e.* the Bridegroom) waketh,"³ He calls me by His Love, and I know His Voice. God calls us suddenly, and as it were startles us, and in these first workings of grace we only feel the movement which, as S. Bernard says, God rouses in us, but without any action of ours.

CHAPTER X.

How we often reject God's Inspirations and refuse to love Him.

"**W**OE unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."⁴ It is the Lord Himself Who says that these men, who were taught the true faith, and had received grace enough to have converted the uttermost heathen, yet persisted in rejecting it, and rebelling against that holy Light. He too has declared that in the Judgment Day the men of Nineve and the Queen of Sheba shall rise up and condemn the Jews; since the Ninevites

¹ Num. xx. 11.

³ Cant. v. 2.

² Acts xii. 7.

⁴ Matt. xi. 12.

repented at the preaching of Jonas, and the Queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,¹ while they who heard the Divine Wisdom of One greater than Solomon, who saw His Miracles and received His tangible Gifts, hardened their hearts and resisted His Grace. They who had least to draw them came to repentance, they to whom most was given resisted; they who least need to learn hasten to the Teacher, they whose need is greatest abide in their foolishness. Nothing can be plainer than this our Lord's teaching, *i.e.*, that the Jews will be condemned as compared with the Ninevites, because with so much favour they showed no love, with so much leading no repentance; while those who had little favour and little leading abounded in love and penitence. S. Augustine throws great light upon our Lord's teaching in his "City of God;"² for, although speaking more particularly of the angels, he applies the subject no less to man. Thus in chap. vi. he sets forth two men absolutely equal in all things pertaining to goodness, assaulted by a like temptation, one resisting, the other yielding to the enemy. Then in chap. ix., having proved that all the angels were created in love, and that probably grace and love were alike in all, he asks how it came to pass that some persevered until they attained to glory, while others fell away to condemnation. To which (he replies) there is no answer, save that while some have persevered through God's Grace, in the pure love they received when created, the others fell therefrom by their own self-will.

But if, as S. Thomas has proved, grace was diversely bestowed upon the angels, and the Seraphim received a much higher degree than the lower angels, how was it that among them the chiefest (for so the Fathers held) should have fallen, while a countless multitude of other angels, inferior both in nature and grace, persevered admirably? Whence comes it that Lucifer,

¹ Luke xi. 31, 32.

² Bk. xii. c. 6-9.

so high by nature, exalted yet higher by grace, fell, while less favoured angels remained steadfast? Doubtless they who persevered owe their perseverance to God, Who in His Mercy made and kept them good; while Lucifer and his tribe owe their fall, as S. Augustine says, to their own free-will, which forsook the Divine Grace upholding them. "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"¹ thou who didst begin "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."² Grace was not lacking to thee, thou hadst it above all others; but thou wast lacking to grace. God did not withhold His Love from thee, but thou wouldest not co-operate with His Love: He would never have rejected thee, if thou hadst not rejected His kindness. O Loving Lord, Thou never leavest those who leave not Thee; Thou never takest away Thy Gifts save from those who withdraw their hearts from Thee.

We defraud God when we take to ourselves the credit of our salvation, but we offend His Mercy if we say that it has ever failed us. We sin against His liberality if we fail to acknowledge His Gifts; but we blaspheme His Goodness if we deny that it has succoured us. Briefly, God speaks clearly and loudly to us all, saying, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help."³

CHAPTER XI.

It is from no lack of Divine Love if we are not filled with Love.

AH! did we but receive the inspirations of Heaven in all their power, how great growth in holiness we should speedily make! Be the stream never so strong, its waters will only come into our garden according to the channels which convey it; and although the

¹ Isa. xiv. 12.

² Prov. iv. 18.

³ Hos. xiii. 9.

Holy Spirit, as a Fountain of Living Water, is ready to overflow our heart, yet as He comes only with the full consent of our own will, He will only pour Himself into us according to that will and our co-operation, as well as according to the abundance of His Good Pleasure; even as the Council [of Trent] calls the correspondence of our will with grace a voluntary reception thereof.

It is in this sense that S. Paul bids the Corinthians "not receive the Grace of God in vain;"¹ for even as a sick man who should take his medicine into his hand, but refuse to swallow it, would indeed have received it after a bootless fashion, so fruitlessly do we receive God's Grace if we leave it outside and accept it not within our heart. It is vain to feel God's inspiration only, and not consent to it. Again, if the sick man takes a part only of his medicine, he can derive but a part of its benefit; and so if, when God inspires us with a hearty impulse to accept His Love, we do not fully receive it, we shall gain but a limited benefit. Those who are inspired to do great things, and yet accept but a part of God's inspiration, are like the men we read of in the Gospel, who, when called by our Lord to follow Him, held back, asking to take leave of those at home, or to bury their dead.

Remember the widow whose vessels were miraculously filled by Elisha.² So long as she had an empty vessel the oil flowed into it, but when she had no more wherein to receive it, the oil stayed. So while our hearts expand, or more truly while we suffer them to be enlarged, and do not refuse the space made by our willing consent to Divine Mercy, that Mercy will not cease to pour in ever more and more Its holy inspirations, we meanwhile abounding more and more in love. But when there is no room, when we cease to accept, it is stayed.

What hinders that we be not as deeply versed in the Love of God as S. Augustine, S. Francis, S. Catherine

¹ 2 Cor. vi. i.

² 2 Kings iv.

of Genoa, or S. Frances? Because God has not given us such grace.

But why has He not given it us? Because we have not worthily corresponded to His inspirations.

Wherefore have we not so corresponded? Because, being free, we have abused our freedom. Wherefore? Nay, here we must halt; for, as says S. Augustine, the depravity of our will comes but from the fault of that cause which commits sin. And we must not imagine that we can give a reason for the fault which leads to sin, inasmuch as the fault would not be sin were it not without reason.

The pious Brother Rufinus, having seen a vision of the glory to which S. Francis was to attain through his humility, asked the Saint to tell him truly what he thought of himself. To which S. Francis replied: "Verily I think myself to be the greatest sinner on earth, and he who least serves our Lord." "But how," Rufinus asked, "can you say this in all truth and conscience, when we see so many who are openly guilty of great sins, from which, God be thanked, you are free?"

To which S. Francis replied: "Had God given to them such mercies as He has given to me, I question not, that, evil as they now seem, they had been more mindful of His Gifts, and served Him better than I; for were God to forsake me, surely I should sin more grievously than they all."

So thought one, who was more seraphic than human. I know that it was from out his humility he thus spoke; but still he believed as a truth that an equal grace, equally bestowed, may be better used by one sinner than another; and I hearken to that great Master of the science of the Saints, as to an oracle, trained up as he was in the school of the Cross. Indeed all holy men since have treasured up his saying, believing that it was in this mind that S. Paul spoke of himself as the chiefest of sinners.¹

S. Theresa, speaking of quiescent prayer, says that

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

"many souls attain so far, but they who pass beyond are few, without knowing why? Surely the fault lies not with God, for if His Divine Majesty gives us grace to arrive so far, I think He would not fail to give us more, save for the hindrances we raise by our own faults." Be it ours then to strive diligently in the love we owe to God, assured that the love He bears to us will never fail.

CHAPTER XII.

*God leaves us wholly free to follow or reject His
Leadings.*

I WILL not dwell here upon the miraculous grace which has in a moment turned the wolf to a lamb, the dry rock to a springing well, the persecutor to an Apostle; and I pass over those extraordinary calls, those holy violences, by which God has been pleased sometimes in one moment to transform some chosen soul from the depth of sin into the height of grace, producing a very moral and spiritual transubstantiation, as in the case of the great Apostle, who from Saul the persecutor became in a moment Paul the chosen vessel. Such privileged souls are a class apart; souls in which God has been pleased to exercise not merely the liberality, but the most prodigal profusion of His Love. God's Justice punishes us in this world, generally by ordinary and imperceptible agents; but sometimes He pours forth a deluge of punishment to proclaim and make us fear the severity of His wrath. Even so ordinarily His Mercy guides souls so gently and tenderly that they scarce perceive its dealings; yet sometimes that Sovereign Mercy overflows its wonted brim, like a swollen river, and pours forth such an impetuous torrent of grace that in one moment the favoured soul is flooded with blessings, thereby testifying that as His Justice takes sometimes an

ordinary, sometimes an extraordinary channel, even so His Mercy is exercised in ordinary ways for the most part, but sometimes in those which are extraordinary.

But what are the ordinary cords by which Divine Providence is wont to draw our hearts to Himself? He tells us by His Prophet Hosea: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."¹ God does not draw us with chains of iron, as though we were beasts, but by loving attraction and holy inspirations; "human cords," that is, adapted to the free heart of man. Pleasure and delight are the natural attractions to man. We offer fruit to a child, and he is drawn by what he likes; not by a physical, but a moral cord. And even so our Heavenly Father draws us; He leads us by attraction, not as of force, but shedding spiritual delights into our heart, so as to gently win us to taste the sweetness of His doctrine. In this way our free-will is nowise forced or constrained by grace; and notwithstanding the All-powerful strength of God's Merciful Hand, which urges the soul with so many leadings and attractions, man's will remains perfectly at large and unrestrained.

Grace draws the heart with so delicate as well as strong a touch that the freedom of our will remains unhindered: its strength does but employ a loving force which nowise interferes with our liberty; we can consent or resist as we choose. But it is as striking as true, that when our will obeys the Divine leading, it obeys as freely as it resists, although obedience depends more upon grace than resistance; so wondrously does God give us power to do what is right, even while He leaves us entire liberty and free-will. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." The original words convey the meaning, "*per-chance* thou wouldest have asked," as though even to this Samaritan woman our Lord meant

¹ Hos. xi. 4.

² John iv. 10.

to say that it depended on her own free-will to ask or not ask.¹

He who should say that it does not depend upon our free-will to co-operate with God's Grace or to reject it, would contradict Holy Scripture, the Fathers, and all experience. But in saying that we may reject God's inspirations and drawings, it is not meant that we can hinder them from being sent : they are in and around us before we realise them ; just as God wakens us out of sleep without any conscious intention on our part, but once awake, it depends on ourselves to rise up. He awakens us without any effort of our own, but He expects us to rise of ourselves ; and if we will not rise, but fall asleep again, we resist His wakening. We cannot hinder God's inspirations from moving us, but if we reject them, and will not follow, then we resist Him ; even as those birds of which I was speaking, which will not be carried onwards by the breeze unless they spread their wings when once launched : but, if lured by some green spot on earth, or numb with having lain low, they do not second the wind's motions, or expand their wings, the wind will be all in vain. Thus God's inspirations prevent us even before we realise them, but so soon as we perceive them we must needs consent and co-operate, or reject them. They come independently of our will, but they depend upon that will for their results.

¹ " . . . Thou *perchance* wouldest have asked of Him. . . . He as yet speaketh to the woman covertly, and little by little entereth into her heart. . . . What more sweet and benign than that exhortation !"—*S. Augustine on S. John iv. Hom. xv. 12, Lib. Fathers.*

A theologian writes concerning this :—

"*Av*, a particle which cannot be exactly rendered by any word in our language, though in particular cases it answers to our Latin *forte*, 'probably,' 'perchance.' It always implies a condition, and therefore a verb. '*Av*' cannot be joined with the present or perfect, because that which is or has been cannot be made conditional. With the future it expresses that which certainly will happen if something else happens first."

CHAPTER XIII.

The first Feelings of Love which Divine Grace kindles in the Soul before it attains to Faith.

THAT breeze which uplifts the birds we spoke of first affects their feathers, as their most susceptible part, and when they move their wings in response, by degrees the bird is uplifted; and thus, as it co-operates with the wind's action, it derives increasing assistance therefrom. Even so when the sacred gust of inspiration raises us into the atmosphere of holy love, it moves our will, and stimulates our natural inclination for what is good, that inclination in its turn serving as a lever. All this is worked in us without our help by God's Grace, and if we co-operate ever so little, well for us! for then that same grace, uniting itself to our feeble efforts and vivifying our dulness with its powerful action, will lead us on from point to point, up to that holy faith we need.

Blessed be God for the grace with which His Holy Spirit sheds the first rays of His living light and warmth into our hearts! Blessed indeed it is to watch that heavenly sunshine gradually shedding its glow upon a soul, never staying till it has kindled it fully with the splendour of its presence, and gladdened it with perfect day! Joyful and glad dawn! Yet after all the dawn is but the beginning of day, and even so these kindlings of love which precede the act of faith needed for our justification are but the imperfect beginnings of love; they are as the first shoots of spring on the mystic tree rather than the ripened fruits.

It is told of S. Pachomius, how as a young soldier of the army sent by Constantius against the tyrant Maxentius, and as yet unknowing of God, he came with his famishing troop to a village nigh to Thebes,

where the inhabitants, being faithful followers of their Lord, and therefore charitable, ministered so lovingly to the soldiers' needs, that Pachomius was amazed; and asking who these kindly hosts could be, and learning that they were Christians, who because of their belief in the Only Son of God did good to all men, hoping to receive their reward of Him, he was roused from heathenism, and the example of these Christians woke the first spark of love in him. And so, being told what was the law of Christ, and being filled with a new light and joy thereby, he went apart to reflect, and after awhile, lifting up his hands to heaven, he cried out, "Lord God, Who madest earth and heaven, if Thou vouchsafest to cast Thine eyes upon my weakness and misery, and to show me Thyself, I engage to serve and obey Thee all my days!" And from the time of this prayer and this promise the love of true holiness grew so vehemently in him, that he went on from strength to strength. Even so the nightingale wakes at dawn of day, plumes its feathers, and by degrees launches forth its ever louder bursts of song.

Consider how God proceeds gradually increasing His gracious inspiration in consenting hearts, drawing them upward by heavenly steps, like to Jacob's ladder. What then are these drawings? The first whereby God wakens us is His work in us, but without us; all the rest are His work in us, but not without us. "Draw me," the Bride says,¹ that is, Be it Thine to begin, for I cannot waken myself without Thy help, but when once Thou hast roused me, O Beloved, "we will run after Thee." Thou wilt go first, drawing me onwards, and I shall follow joyfully. But let no one imagine that Thou drawest me as an unwilling slave or an inanimate object; it is "because of the savour of Thy good ointments."² A sweet savour can have no power to draw save its sweetness, neither can sweetness draw us without delight.

¹ Cant. i. 4.

² Cant. i. 3.

CHAPTER XIV.

How Love is accepted by Faith.

WHEN God gives us faith, He comes to us and speaks, not as it were in words, but by inspiration ; offering that which He sets before the mind so lovingly that the will rejoices therein, and urges the understanding to accept the same. Thus God presents the mysteries of the faith to the soul amid shadows and darkness, so that we do but perceive them dimly ; just as when in nature mists cover the earth we do not see the sun, but are conscious that where it is there is the most brightness, so that we perceive without really seeing it.¹ Yet this clear shadow of faith having penetrated the mind by no force of words or argument, but solely by its own sweetness, it exercises so great an authority over the understanding, that it conveys a certainty beyond all else, and entirely enthrals the mind and its powers.

Yes, verily, faith is the mind's best ally, and may well say to all boasted human knowledge with the Bride, "I am black but comely."² "O ye earthy science and learning, I am black, for I lie in the shadows ; but I am comely by reason of my absolute certainty, and could mortal eyes see me as I really am they would think so. Am I not indeed infinitely gracious, since not all the mists and darkness amid which I am not seen but dimly perceived, cannot hinder, but that prizing me above all else, the mind presses on to seek me, and enthrones me on its loftiest throne, whence I rule all knowledge and subdue all earthly wisdom." Even as the chieftains of Israel enthroned Jehu, crying out, "Jehu is king !"³ so all the intellectual faculties

¹ " Pas voir, mais entrevoir."

² Cant. i. 5.

³ 2 Kings ix. 13.

are fain to submit to faith and proclaim it monarch. Doubtless the Christian religion owes much to argument, to miracles and the like ; but it is faith alone by which it is believed and confirmed, accepted for the beauty of its truth, and the truth of its beauty, for the calmness it imparts to the will, the certainty it gives to the understanding. The Jews saw our Lord's miracles and heard His marvellous teaching ; but not being willing to receive the faith, *i.e.* their will not being alive to its beauty because of the malice of their hearts, they remained in unbelief. They perceived the force of the argument, but did not appreciate the sweetness of its conclusion, and therefore did not accept its truth : yet the action of faith lies in that acceptance by which the mind, having received the welcome light of truth, cleaves to it with a calm but strong and powerful certainty and reliance on the authority of that which reveals it.

You know how in a General Council the matters in debate are discussed and argued, and finally the Fathers, that is to say the Bishops, and the Pope as Chief Bishop, decide, resolve, and pronounce ; and their determination spoken, all accept it, not because of the reasonings alleged during the past discussion, but by virtue of the Holy Spirit's authority, Who, presiding invisibly over the Council, has judged, decided and spoken by the mouth of those whom He has appointed His ministers. Thus the inquiry and discussion is made in the court of Priests and Doctors, but the decision and its acceptance takes place in the sanctuary, where the Holy Ghost, Which inspires the Church, speaks by the mouth of Its Chief Pastor, as our Lord promised. So, like as the ostrich lays its eggs in the Libyan sands, but the sun alone hatches them, do the Doctors set forth the truth by their researches and discussions, but the sunshine of Eternal Wisdom certifies and accepts it. And finally, the conviction which man's mind receives concerning the mysteries and revelations of the faith begins with the sense of

satisfaction which the will derives from the beauty and acceptableness of the proposed truth ; so that faith presupposes an impulse of love felt by our heart towards heavenly things.

CHAPTER XV.

How largely holy Hope feeds Love.

JUST as we are no sooner exposed to the light of the mid-day sun than we feel its warmth, so no sooner has the light of faith cast the brightness of its truth upon our mind than our will begins to feel the holy warmth of Heavenly Love.

Faith teaches us with infallible certainty that God is, that His Goodness is Infinite, that He not only can but will impart Himself to us, and that He has prepared all needful to enable us to attain everlasting glory. Now we possess a natural tendency to our Sovereign Good, by reason of which our heart knows no other rest, nor can refrain from ceaselessly testifying that its perfect contentment is lacking. But when holy faith makes plain the All-worthy Object of this natural craving, then how great is the thrilling delight which the soul experiences ! and how fervently it cries out, " Behold, Thou art fair, my Beloved ! "

Eliezer went to seek a bride for the son of his master Abraham : how could he tell that he would find her such as he desired ? But when he had found her at the well, so perfect in beauty and grace, and above all when she was given to him, he blessed God with a thankful heart.* So the heart of man seeks God by natural inclination, not really knowing what He is ; but having found Him by the well of faith, and beholding Him Good, Gracious, and Loving to all, and ready to give Himself to those who seek Him, then indeed it seeks earnestly to be united for ever to that

* Gen. xxiv. 27.

most gracious Love. And even as Jacob wept for very joy when he had found Rachel;¹ so our frail heart, having found God and received that His most precious gift of faith, melts from exceeding love for the Infinite Good revealed to it in so much beauty.

There are times when we feel an unaccountable presentiment of gladness, which is often the presage of some great joy; whence men have fancied that our good angels impart such, knowing that which is about to happen; as, on the other hand, they send us warnings of coming danger, so that we may be watchful and call upon God. Now, when the joy thus foreshadowed arises, our hearts expand to meet it, and remembering that previously unaccountable sense of gladness, we then for the first time read it aright. And just so our heart has long vibrated towards its real Good without our knowing what the vibration meant; but so soon as faith points that out, we see at once what it was our soul craved and our mind sought after. Sure it is that whether we will or will not, our minds tend towards our Sovereign Good. But after all, what is that? We are like the Athenians who worshipped the One True God,² but as "Unknown," until such time as S. Paul proclaimed Him to them. Even so our heart's deep though secret instinct tends to its real bliss, and seeks on all sides, like one blindfold, for it; not knowing where it lies nor what it is until faith points it out and displays its marvels. And then, having found the hidden treasure, how boundless that poor heart's joy and rest will be! "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth,"³ even while I knew Him not. I knew not what I sought or wherefore nothing satisfied me. I fancied I loved, yet knew not what to love; but now "I sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to my taste."⁴

¹ Gen. xxix. 11.

³ Cant. iii. 4.

² Acts xvii. 23.

⁴ Cant. ii. 3.

CHAPTER XVI.

How Love is carried out by Hope.

THE human understanding being thus addressed to the contemplation of that which faith sets before it as its Sovereign Good, an exceeding attraction thereto is kindled in the will, which greatly desires the presence of that Divine Object, and causes the soul to cry out, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Mouth."¹ And even as the hawk, when unhooded, darts upon its prey, and if restrained by its lures struggles vehemently against the hand which holds them, so when faith has torn asunder the veil of ignorance, and shown us our Sovereign Good, Which as yet we are unable fully to possess, by reason of the hindrances of mortality, then in the intensity of longing we cry out,

"As pants the hart for cooling streams,
When heated in the chase;
So longs my soul, O God, for Thee,
And Thy refreshing Grace.

For Thee, my God, the Living God,
My thirsty soul doth pine,
O when shall I behold Thy Face
Thou Majesty Divine!"²

¹ Cant. i. 2.

² Ps. xlii. The old French "Tate and Brady" renders these lines:

"Les cerfs longtemps pourchassez,
Fuyant pantois et lassez,
Si fort les eaux ne desirent,
Que nos cœurs d'ennuis pressez,
Seigneur, après toy souspirent.
Nos ames en languissant
D'un desir tousjours croissant
Crient: Helas! quand sera-ce,
O Seigneur Dieu tout-puissant
Que nos yeux verront ta face?"

It is a rightful longing, for who but must long for so great a good? But it were a fruitless longing, and one which would be a very martyrdom if we had no hope one day to satisfy it. What had he done who cried out, "My tears have been my meat day and night," because his Lord had forgotten him, and his enemies said, "Where is now thy God?"¹ what had he done without some manner of hope, sooner or later, to obtain that Presence for Which he sighed? Or the Bride who was "sick of love"² because she could not find her Beloved; love kindled longing and eager pursuit, and her disappointed search caused her "soul to fail,"³ and she had altogether perished without some ray of hope. Thus, in order that we may not faint and fail under the anxiety and sorrow of unsatisfied longing, that same Sovereign Good Which kindles our desires certifies us of their satisfaction by countless promises given both by His Word and His daily inspirations, provided we will but make use of the means He offers us to that end.

Now these promises have a special and marvellous power at once to increase the cause of our anxiety, and, as they increase that, to put away its effects: for surely God's promise of Paradise must infinitely quicken our desire to enter upon its enjoyment; and at the same time it altogether calms all anxious restlessness which accompanied that desire, because those blessed promises given by God soothe the heart, and that soothing calm is the foundation of the holy virtue which we call hope. And this because the will, convinced that it may attain the Sovereign Good by means of God's offered means thereto, performs two main acts of grace, by the one expecting God to give it the fruition of His Sovereign Goodness, by the other eagerly aspiring to that holy fruition.

Of a truth the only difference between hoping and aspiring is, that we *hope* for things which are to come by means of another, and we *aspire* to things which

¹ Ps. xlii.² Cant. v. 8.³ Cant. v. 6.

we can obtain of ourselves. And since we attain to the enjoyment of our Sovereign Good, Which is God, by His Grace and Mercy above all, while yet that very Mercy requires the co-operation of our feeble will with His All-powerful Grace, so our hope must needs be mingled with aspiration, so that neither can be wholly apart from the other. But hope is ever the chiefest, being founded upon Divine Grace, without which, as we could not even think fitly of that Sovereign Good, so neither could we so aspire to it as to obtain the fulfilment of our aspiration.

Aspiration then is an offshoot of hope, as our co-operation is of grace ; and just as those who think to hope without aspiring would be rejected as careless and cowardly, so they who would aspire without hoping are rash and presumptuous. But when hope is followed by aspiration, so that hoping we aspire, and aspiring we hope, then hope develops into a bold aim, and aspiration becomes a humble desire according to God's inspiration ; while both spring from that longing love for our Sovereign Good, which we shall ever love the better as we more confidently hope for it. Thus hope is nothing else than the loving delight we feel in expecting and claiming our Sovereign Good. All comes of love. Faith no sooner showed me my Sovereign Good than I loved Him, and being absent, I desired Him : so soon as I knew He willed to give Himself to me, I yet more eagerly loved and desired Him ; and thus by degrees love's longing was turned into hope and expectation ; so that hope is an expectant, awaiting love. And because that Sovereign Good which hope expects is God, and because it hopes and expects in and through God Only, this holy virtue hope, finding as it does its sole end and satisfaction on all sides in God, is what we call a cardinal or theological virtue.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Love which comes of Hope is Good, albeit imperfect.

THAT love which we exercise in hope goes out to God, but it returns to us ; it looks to His Divine Goodness, but it has a view to our profit ; it tends to His Supreme Perfection, but it ministers to our satisfaction : that is to say, it does not lift us up to God because He is infinitely good in Himself, but because He is infinitely good towards us. Thus ours is a self-interested love. Not that it is so entirely self-interested as to make us love God solely out of self-seeking. Surely no ; for it were sacrilege to love God merely with a view to our own selfish ease and gain. The soul which loves God only for love of self puts self in the place of God.

But there is a wide difference between loving God for that which I expect from Him and loving Him only for that cause, just as it is one thing to say, "I love God for myself," and "I love God for love of myself." In the first case I love to possess Him as my own, to have Him as my Sovereign Good ; and that is like the Heavenly Bride who is for ever repeating, "My Beloved is mine and I am His."¹ But to love God out of selfishness is to put myself as the end of my love, and thus to make the level of God's Love below that of self, which is a manifest impiety.

So then the love which we call hope is a longing, holy and systematic, by which we do not seek to adapt God to our purposes, but to unite ourselves to Him, as our final bliss. In such love we love both self and God, but not as equalling or preferring self to God ; the love of self commingles with

¹ Cant. ii. 16.

the love of God, but the latter predominates ; self-love is a motive, but not the chief end ; we do not bring Him down to us, but raise ourselves to Him ; we are not His End or Perfection, but He ours ; we belong to Him, not He to us ; and in the relation of our Sovereign Good He receives nought of us, we all of Him ; He sets forth His Riches and Goodness, we our poverty and need ; so that to love God as our Sovereign Good is an acknowledgment that He is our End, our Rest, and our Perfection, in the enjoyment of which all our happiness consists.

There are certain things which we prize solely because they are serviceable to us, *e.g.*, our slave, our horse, our garment ; and the affection we bear to these is simply selfish. Then there are our friends, whom we love because of the gratification they minister to us, but at the same time we reciprocate the gain, so that our affection is not purely selfish. Other affections there are of a dependent nature, as those for our princes, pastors, or parents, whom we love not merely because they are such, but because they hold that relative position towards ourselves individually. And this affection is one of reverence and respect, for we love, *e.g.*, our parents, not because they belong to us, but because we belong to them. Even so we love and long after God through hope, not that He may be Good, for that He is ; not because He is ours, but because we are His ; not as though He were made for us, but because we are made for Him.

Observe, moreover, one feature of this love, namely, that while the reason which makes us cherish it is our own interest, the measure thereof depends upon the excellence and worth of that which we love. We love benefactors because they are such ; but we love them more or less in proportion to the extent of their benefaction. Why then do we love God with this longing ? Because He is our Good. But why do we love Him above all ? Because He is our Sovereign Good.

Sovereign Love is found only in charity ; the love of hope is imperfect, and consists more of feeling than fact, without charity ; yet as a motive power nothing can exceed hope, and therefore we say that through hope we love God supremely.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Love is to be found in Penitence.

PENITENCE, speaking generally, is that repentance by which we reject and abhor sin committed, resolving to repair as far as possible all injury towards him we have offended. I include reparation in my definition, because there is no real abhorrence of sin where its offence is voluntarily left unatoned. Putting aside the penitence of the heathen of whom Tertullian speaks, we will speak only of a righteous penitence, which also varies according to the motives whence it springs. There is a penitence altogether human and moral, such as that of Alexander the Great, of whom Cicero records, that having killed his friend Clitus, he sought to die of hunger ; or that of Alcibiades, who, being convicted of error by Socrates, wept bitterly. Aristotle says that the intemperate man who gives himself up to voluptuousness is wholly incorrigible, because he cannot repent, and he who is without penitence is incurable.

Assuredly Seneca, Plutarch, and the Pythagoreans, who so strongly urge self-examination (especially the first, who dwells upon the pain of remorse), knew what repentance was ; and Epictetus speaks forcibly of penitence.

There is another penitence which, albeit moral, has further a religious element in that it arises from a natural consciousness of having offended God by sin. Sundry philosophers realised that a virtuous life was acceptable to the Divinity, and *per contra*, that He

was displeased by a vicious life. Epictetus desired to die a Christian death (as it seems probable he did), saying among other things that he should be content if in the hour of death he could lift his hands to God and say, "I have never voluntarily dishonoured Thee." And he requires his ideal philosopher to swear never to disobey God or murmur at aught He does ; teaching, moreover, that God and our guardian angels see all we do. Such repentance is an offshoot of moral religion. But forasmuch as all these philosophers had more knowledge than love, nature's light enabled them rather to see how greatly sin offended God than to feel warmly eager to repent and atone for the offence. So little did they understand a really religious penitence that the most virtuous, the Stoics, affirmed that the wise man was never sad ; a maxim as false as that on which it rested is contrary to experience, namely, that the wise man was not guilty of sin.

So we may fairly say that penitence is an altogether Christian virtue, for one main portion of Christian philosophy lies in it, teaching that he who should say he sinned not is a fool, and he who would think to condone his sins without repentance a criminal. Such is the point of our Lord's teaching, "Repent ye."

The course of penitence is this. We begin by fearing, because we have so greatly displeased God, Who abhors all that is evil ; and from out this fear rise sundry motives, any or all of which bring us to repentance. We remember that our offended God has prepared the bitter pains of hell for sinners, casting them out from Paradise, the portion of the just. And this double fear, of incurring evil and losing the good, is a great motive to repentance. Or the thought of the hideousness of sin, of God's Image marred, of the loss of Heaven and angelic companionship, kindles it : or the beauty of holiness, or the example of saints ; for who can con-

template the repentance of the Magdalene, of S. Mary of Egypt, or the penitents of whom S. John Climacus bears record, without being moved?

CHAPTER XIX.

Penitence without Love is imperfect.

ALL such motives are taught by our Christian faith, and therefore the penitence they produce is praiseworthy, though imperfect, and that because Divine Love has no share therein. All such repentance is kindled by a desire for the welfare, happiness, or glory of our own soul, that is to say, by the love of self,—a lawful love; and far be it from me to say that such penitence rejects the Love of God: but still it does not embrace it; it is not opposed to that Love, but it is as yet without its pale. That will which simply accepts what is good does well, but rejecting what is better it fails therein. Thus my resolution to give alms to-day is good; but if I resolve only to give alms to-day that is bad, because it sets aside what is best, namely, to give to-day, and to-morrow, and always, as far as possible. It is well, doubtless, to repent in order to avoid hell and win Heaven, but were any one to resolve that he would have no other motive for his repentance, he would voluntarily exclude the best, namely, the Love of God, and therein he would greatly sin. What father but would be displeased if his son resolved indeed to serve him, yet never for or with love?

The beginning of a good thing is good, its advance is better, its end is best. But this must be progressive, and no one can begin by the end. Childhood is a lovely thing, but it were not desirable always to be a child: it is well to begin to learn, but he who so began intending never to finish were unreasonable. Fear and all such motives for repentance are good as

first steps towards Christian wisdom and penitence, but he who should deliberately reject love as the perfection of repentance would grievously offend Him Who has made His Love the end of all things.

Conclusion. That repentance which excludes the Love of God is of hell. Repentance which does not reject that Love, though as yet without it, is imperfect, and cannot win salvation until it attains to love. So that, as S. Paul says, he who gives his body to be burned, and all his goods to the poor, without charity, profiteth nothing ; and we may re-echo his words and say, that though we should weep out our eyes in tears, and break our heart with grief, yet without the blessed Love of God it would all be of no avail for life eternal.

CHAPTER XX.

How Love and Grief are mingled in Contrition.

NATURE has never yet turned fire into water, albeit certain waters are capable of taking fire. Yet God did this once miraculously. We read in the Maccabees¹ how the Israelites, when led into captivity in Babylon, hid the fire of the altar in a hollow pit without water ; and how after many years their descendants, searching for it, found no fire, but "thick water," which, when they had laid on the altar, as though it had been fire, and sprinkled the wood and sacrifices therewith, the sun shone forth and there was a great fire kindled. Even so amid the tribulation and mourning of a hearty repentance God often hides the sacred fire of His Love in our heart ; and that love first turns to the water of tears, and that again to a glowing fire. Thus it was that the penitent Magdalene loved her Lord, her love turning to tears, and her tears to so great ardour, that, as He said, her sins were forgiven, because "she loved much."² And as

¹ Bk. ii. c. x.

² Luke vii. 47.

by the action of fire wine is reduced to a water (*eau de vie*) which contains so large a portion of fire that it is commonly called "ardent spirits," so a thoughtful consideration of that Goodness Which we have so often offended by sin produces the water of holy penitence, whence again comes forth that sacred fire which may fitly be called ardent. It is truly water, for penitence is a very real sorrow ; but it burns because it contains the very essence of love, whereby it imparts the life of grace. Therefore perfect penitence has two separate effects : through grief and abhorrence it severs us from the creature and from sin, to which we were bound by pleasure therein ; and through that love whence it springs it reconciles and reunites us to God, from Whom we were estranged ; so that it at once draws us from sin by repentance and unites us to God by love.

Nevertheless that perfect love of God above all things does not invariably precede such repentance, any more than such repentance invariably precedes this love. For though it may frequently be so in other cases, when God's Love dawns in the heart penitence rises out of it ; or again, penitence being roused, love springs forth from it. And as when Esau came to the birth his twin Jacob seized him by the foot,¹ so that their entrance into the world might be bound up one with the other, even so repentance, with its hardness and pain, is first born, Esau-like, and then sweet love holds on to it like Jacob, and cleaves so tight that they seem to have but one source,—and the end of repentance is the beginning of perfect love. Esau came forth first, and penitence for the most part is perceived before love ; but love, albeit like Jacob the youngest, yet rules over repentance, and turns it to joy.

Remember the sorrowing Magdalene : "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him ;"² but when she had found Him amid her tears she held Him fast in love. Imperfect love longs

¹ Gen. xxv.

² John xx.

for Him ; penitence seeks and finds Him ; perfect love clasps Him tight, even like the Ethiopian ruby, the tint of which is pale until it be cast into vinegar, when it becomes bright and sparkling. Just so that love which precedes penitence is mostly imperfect, but once steeped in the bitterness of repentance it revives and becomes admirable. Yet sometimes repentance, though true, does not contain the full action, but only the essence or virtue of love. Do you ask how it can have that without action? Consider : the motive of perfect repentance is God's Goodness, which we grieve to have sinned against. But a motive is such only in that it moves, and God's Goodness can excite no movement save love, that is, union. Therefore true repentance, though we do not see the full action of love inherent in it, yet receives the impulse of that love, and thereby unites us to His Goodness ; just as it is the magnet's special property to attract iron and unite it to itself, but nevertheless we see iron which has merely touched the magnet become capable of attracting other iron in consequence. And so true repentance, when it is touched by the motive power of love, acquires its property, and stimulates the union of our heart to the Divine Will.

You will perhaps ask what difference there is between such an impulse of union and love's own act? It is this : the action of love is one of union, but it springs forth from delight ; whereas the union which arises from penitence is not caused by delight, but by grief, repentance, reparation, and reconciliation. In that it is a unitive process it is of the nature of love ; in that it is bitter and painful it is of the nature of penitence ; and to sum up, in its natural state it is a true movement of penitence, but one possessing the virtue and unitive grace of love. Wine of Theriacum is not so called because it actually contains any actual Theriaca ;¹ but because the root of the vine has been

¹ *Theriaca Andromachi*, an antidote to all poison, especially venomous bites, invented by one Andromachus, Nero's physician.

watered with that decoction, so that the grapes it bears and the wine they produce have imbibed the virtue of the potent antidote. And even so we need not marvel that penitence should, as Holy Scripture says, efface sin, save the soul, and make it acceptable to God, all which are the results properly appertaining to love; love's very choicest works being thus wrought by penitence through the motive power which has excited it.

Nor need we wonder if the strength of love be kindled amid repentance before love itself take shape. We have seen the sun's rays reflected on a burning glass till they produce a consuming heat, even before we perceive any flame. So God's Holy Spirit kindling a sense of sin against God's Mercy, which our will receives; penitence grows, until that will so earnestly craves to return to God that a flame breaks out even before love is moulded, and thus the end of penitence is merged in the beginning of love, like Esau's foot in Jacob's hand, the birth of one bound up with the birth of the other. Thus the beginning of perfect love does not merely follow upon the end penitence, but they are entirely commingled, and therefrom penitence and contrition acquire life eternal.

And inasmuch as this loving repentance takes expression ordinarily in aspirations such as those of old: "I am Thine, O save me;"¹ "Be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in Thee;"² "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in, even unto my soul;"³ "Make me as one of Thy hired servants;"⁴ "God be merciful to me a sinner;"⁵—it is not untrue to speak of

Theriaca was compounded of no less than seventy-two ingredients, one of which was the dried flesh of vipers, whence its name. Theriaca retained its place in the London Pharmacopœia as late as 1771, and in the Parisian Pharmacopœia it was to be found as late as 1837. S. Francis de Sales uses it as an illustration in the "Esprit" (p. 250).

¹ Ps. cxix. 94.

² Ps. lvii. 1.

³ Ps. lxi. 1.

⁴ Luke xv. 19.

⁵ Luke xviii. 13.

prayer justifying ; for penitent prayer, or prayerful penitence, which lifts the soul to God and reunites it to His Mercy, does assuredly obtain pardon in virtue of that Holy Love with which it is inspired. And verily we all should be constant in such ejaculatory prayer, issuing from a loving penitence and a great longing after reconciliation with God ; whereby we may "pour out our heart before God,"¹ pour it out before and into His All-pitying Heart, which will never fail to extend its Mercy to us.

CHAPTER XXI.

How our Lord's Love draws us on to Faith and Charity.

BETWEEN the first awakening from sin or unbelief and a final resolve to believe fully there often comes a period in which we can but pray with the father of the demoniac boy : "Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief."² I am no longer plunged in the darkness of total unbelief, yet is my belief faint and shadowy : Lord, help me !

S. Augustine, in a very remarkable passage, very strikingly says, "Hear and understand, O man. Art thou not drawn ? then pray that thou mayest be drawn ;" wherein he does not allude to the first motion God excites in us when He rouses us from the slumber of sin. No one can ask before he be awakened ; but he is speaking of our resolve to be faithful, holding that to believe is to be drawn, and therefore he admonishes them that are drawn to believe in God, to ask the gift of faith. And assuredly none could better know the difficulties arising ordinarily between the first impulse stirred in us by God and the perfect resolution to believe ; he who was so variously moved by the words of the great S. Ambrose, by the conversation of Pontilianus,³ and manifold other

¹ Ps. xlii. 4.

² Mark ix. 24.

³ Conf. bk. viii. 6.

means, and yet hesitated so long ere he could decide ; so that truly to none were more fitly said that which he said thereafter to others : " O Augustine, if thou be not drawn, if thou believest not, pray that thou mayest be drawn and believe !"

Our Dear Lord draws hearts by the attractions with which He sets forth His Heavenly Truths, but before they are altogether won to perfect submission the enemy likewise exercises his craft in temptation. Meanwhile we are fully free to accept or reject those Divine attractions,¹ but if we do not repulse the grace of holy love, it will go on for ever swelling within our soul, until we be wholly converted, like to a mighty river overspreading a plain.

If that inspiration which has led us to believe be not resisted, it will lead us on further to penitence and love. S. Peter, like those birds we wot of,² moved by the inspiration of his Master's look,³ and letting himself be freely borne by the kindly breeze of the Holy Spirit, gazed into the life-giving Eyes which had stirred him, and reading there, as in a book of life, the blessed promise of pardon, he drew thence a lawful hope ; and going forth, he realised and abhorred the greatness of his sin ; he wept bitterly, and poured forth his sorrowful heart before the Merciful Heart of his Lord, asking pardon for his sin, and resolving perfect faithfulness for the future. So by this progressive course, fostered by continual grace, he attained remission of sin ; going on from grace to grace, even as S. Prosper says, " Without grace we cannot follow after grace."

In short, thus it is that the soul prevented by grace, experiencing its leadings and yielding to them, comes, so to say, to itself, and breaks forth : " Draw me, I will run after Thee." Thy fruit is sweet to my taste, the savour of Thy ointment is refreshing. The Bride would not so cry out to her Beloved were she not moved thereto by His charms ; but directly that she feels these, she prays Him to draw her, and being

¹ See Council of Trent. ² See p. 58. ³ Luke xxii. 61.

drawn, she runs ; but she would not so run were she not won and revived by the sweetness of those perfumes ; and the closer she wins to her Heavenly Bridegroom the more delicious those perfumes become, until at last He Himself flows into her heart with the very fulness of all possible sweetness and perfection.

Thus it is that heavenly inspiration comes and prevents us, kindling our will to holy love. And if we reject it not, it envelops us, urging us ever onwards ; if we fail it not, it will never fail us until it bring us to that haven of perfect love, fulfilling towards us the office of the Archangel Raphael to Tobias, guiding us through the journey of penitence, shielding us from the assaults of Satan, and comforting and strengthening us under all difficulty.

CHAPTER XXII.

What Charity is.

IT is thus that by a gradual and most ineffable tenderness God leads the soul He brings up out of the Egypt of sin from step to step until He brings it to the promised land, by which I mean holy Charity, which is rather a friendship than a self-interested love, since by charity we love God for His Own Sake and His Gracious Goodness ; and it is real friendship, being as it is reciprocal, and God's Love is Eternal, man's temporal. It is a recognised affection, for God, Who has Himself inspired this love, cannot but know it, neither can we fail to be aware of His Love for us, since He has published it abroad, and we know that whatever good we possess is the result of His Benevolence : while, moreover, He keeps up a perpetual intercourse with us through His inspirations and leadings. He is never weary of proving His Love by all manner of tokens, having revealed all His secrets to us as to trusted friends, and as the climax of His

loving intercourse, He has given Himself to be our Food in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. On our side we can communicate with Him continually at will by prayer, our whole life being bound up in and of and by Him.

Now this affection is not simple friendship, but one of *dilection*, by which we choose God as the object of special love, "the Chiefest among ten thousand."¹ It is a supreme dilection, for charity loves God with so exceeding and predominant an affection that all other love seems nought in comparison. Verily it is a love which no human or angelic power can create, nor aught save "the Holy Ghost Which is given unto us;"² and even as the soul, which is the life of our body, comes into that body through God's natural Providence, so that charity which is the life of the heart, is not of us, but is poured into our heart by His Supernatural Providence.

Therefore we call it a supernatural affection, and that the rather because it has reference to God, not according to our natural knowledge of His Goodness, but through the supernatural knowledge which comes of faith. Therefore charity is the crowning grace of faith and hope, and queen-like sheds its sweetness over the whole soul, making it to be beautiful and acceptable to Divine Goodness; so that if the soul be a kingdom of which the Holy Spirit is King, charity is there to be found as "a queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours."³ If the soul be the regal consort of our Heavenly King, charity is as the royal crown upon her head; or if the soul and body together are as a little world, charity is the sun which warms, vivifies, and embellishes the whole.

Blessed is he whose heart is filled with this most holy affection, for verily "all good things come together" therewith.⁴

¹ Cant. v. 10.

³ Ps. xlv. 10.

² Rom. v. 5.

⁴ Wisd. vii. 11.

BOOK III.

THE PROGRESS AND PERFECTION OF LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

How Divine Love may be continually growing in us.

THE friends of God "go from strength to strength,"¹ and are renewed every day, *i.e.*, through good works they grow in that righteousness they have received of God's Grace ever more and more, according as we read, "He that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still;"² "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;"³ "Speaking the truth in love, let us grow up into Him in all things, Which is the Head, even Christ;"⁴ and again, "I pray that your love may abound more and more."⁵

I never heard of any animal to whose growth there was no limit save the crocodile, which being extremely small at first, continues to grow so long as it lives, wherein it represents alike good and evil men. For "the presumption of them that hate Thee increaseth ever more and more,"⁶ says David; and "The just shine more and more unto the perfect day."⁷ It is not possible for them to be stationary; he who does not gain must lose in this commerce; he who is not ascending the ladder must descend;⁸ he who conquers not must needs be conquered. We live amid risk and strife; unless we fight we shall perish, but we cannot

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

² Rev. xxii. 11.

³ Prov. iv. 18.

⁴ Eph. iv. 15.

⁵ Phil. i. 9.

⁶ Ps. lxxxiv. 24.

⁷ Prov. iv. 18.

⁸ Gen. xxviii. 12.

fight without overcoming, nor overcome without being victorious. S. Bernard, quoting Job's words that "man continueth not,"¹ goes on to show that he must continually advance or fall back; he cannot be stationary. "All run, but one receiveth the prize; so run that ye may obtain."² What is the prize save Jesus Christ? and how are ye to obtain except ye follow Him? And if ye follow, ye must be ever going on, for He will never pause, but continue in His course of love and obedience unto death, the death of the Cross.

Let there be no limit, S. Bernard says, save that of life to your pursuit of your Lord; run eagerly and swiftly, for what avails it that you run unless you attain? "I have applied my heart to fulfil Thy statutes alway, even unto the end."³ David says not for a while, but unto the end; and forasmuch as he seeks eternal well-doing his reward will be eternal. "Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way, and walk in the Law of the Lord;"⁴ and woe be to them that are impure, and walk not therein. Satan has said, "I will sit upon the mount;"⁵ but we are on a road, and a road means walking, not sitting; and he who walks rightly must make ground. It was to His chosen friend that God said, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect."⁶

Real virtue knows no limit, but is ever pressing onward; above all, holy charity, which is the queen of virtues, and which, having an infinite aim, would itself become infinite could it find a heart capable of infinity; for it is restrained only by the capacity of its recipients, by reason of which, just as no one can ever see God fully, so no one can love Him as fully as He is to be loved. That heart which could love God fully would possess a will infinitely good, which none can possess save God Only. So we may go on continually attaining greater heights of perfection in love, but our love can never be infinite. God's Holy Spirit can raise our

¹ Job xiv. 2.² 1 Cor. ix. 24.³ Ps. cxix. 112.⁴ Ps. cxix. 1.⁵ Isa. xiv. 13.⁶ Gen. xvii. 1.

minds to great supernatural efforts; but there is a mighty gulf between the finite and the infinite, and before they can be assimilated either must lose its specific nature, which cannot be. Thus even our Lord's own Charity, in so far as it was human, however great and superior to all that men or angels can fathom, yet is not infinite in its humanity, but only inasmuch as it flowed from a Person of Infinite Excellence, from a Divine Person, the Eternal Son of the Omnipotent Father.

Meanwhile it is a priceless gift that we are permitted to go on in unlimited growth in God's Love amid this weary life. "They shall go from strength to strength."

CHAPTER II.

How easy our Lord has made the growth of Love.

CONSIDER the cup of cold water¹ or the mouthful of bread given to the poor for Christ's Sake: how petty a thing it is in man's sight, and yet God rewards it, and largely increases the love of the giver. Among all the fine linen and costly gifts of the Tabernacle we find goats' hair accepted,² and in like wise God accepts and rewards the smallest acts which spring from love. Like as in Arabia Felix, not the aromatic plants alone, but all vegetation shares in their sweetness, so in the loving soul, not only acts of direct charity, but all minor duties are affected by the grace of holy love, and raise up a sweet savour before God's Majesty, Who in return augments that gracious love. I say God makes it to increase, because love does not grow as a tree, sending forth its branches of itself; but like faith and hope, it springs solely from God's Goodness, which increases and perfects it, like the bee, which, born as it is in honey, continues to be fed thereon. And just as the pearl is not only formed of

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

² Matt. x. 42.

³ Ex. xxxv. 23.

dew, but is fed thereby, and the mother of pearl opens its shell towards the sky, as though to invite the sweet dews of dawning day ; so, having received faith, hope, and charity from God's exceeding Love, we must needs continually turn and open our hearts to Him that we may receive the increase of those virtues. Thus Our Mother Church teaches us to pray : " Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity ;"¹ therein imitating the Apostles' petition, " Lord, increase our faith,"² and accepting what S. Paul teaches, *i.e.*, that " God is able to make all grace abound toward you."³

God gives this increase according to the use we make of His Grace, as it is written, " Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance."⁴ For in this way we can fulfil our Saviour's precept, " Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ;"⁵ as though He said, Go on storing up the treasures of good works, —fastings, prayers, and alms. And as the widow's two mites were accepted, and great treasures accumulate out of tiny offerings, so very trifling good deeds, imperfect as they may seem, yet have their value in God's Sight ; so that, although in themselves they may not have strength to increase our love already existing, yet His Divine Goodness credits us with them, and will not fail to reward them with greater love now and a more abundant share of glory hereafter.

Bees make that delicious honey which is their chief work, but their wax too has its value ; and the loving heart which strives after great and fervent virtues will not lose the reward of those lesser good deeds, and God will love him the more for them. And God never loves a loving soul without increasing its love, our love being the special product of His Love for us. The more stedfastly we gaze upon a mirror the more our reflection seems to gaze in return at us, and the more

¹ Collect for Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

² Luke xvii. 5.

³ 2 Cor. ix. 8.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 12.

⁵ Matt. vi. 20.

God suffers His loving gaze to rest upon our soul, made as it is in His Image and Likeness, so much the more we are won to gaze upon Him, responding as we may in our littleness to the increase of His Mighty Love.

The Council of Trent affirms that righteousness is maintained and increased by good works, and that, as S. Bernard says, without exception, little things fostering holy love in their proportion, and great deeds more and more. Such is the Love God bears to our souls ; such the longing we ought to cherish for growth in His Love. His Gracious Tenderness turns all to our good, and enables us to reap the fruit of all our efforts to please Him, however frail they be.

Among moral virtues we do not find that trifling efforts increase the virtue whence they spring ; on the contrary, if very small they enfeeble it : *e.g.*, liberality dwindles where our gifts are insignificant, and becomes niggardliness. But among those virtues which are heaven-born, above all in love, every exercise thereof brings increase. Nor need we marvel if Divine Love, that royal virtue, has naught great or small but what is loveable ; even as the balm, monarch of all aromatic plants, has no leaf or twig which does not carry its sweet savour. And what could love produce that would not be worthy of love, and tend to love ?

CHAPTER III.

How the loving Soul advances in Love.

LET us follow the Example of the Great Master of that Love we teach, and use a parable. A great king having espoused a gracious princess, brought her one day apart to hold converse with her, when behold, through an untimely accident, she suddenly swooned away, to his great grief and consternation, for he loved her as his life. But this very love roused him to

succour her, and he speedily found a precious cordial which revived her ; then gently raising her, he upheld and sustained her as she walked, until at last the virtue of a certain plaster which he laid upon her heart gave her strength to go alone, he only giving her his arm, hers the while resting against his breast ; thereby rendering her four kindly services. For first, he testified the loving care he had for her ; secondly, he still comforted her ; thirdly, if her strength failed again, he was upholding her ; and fourthly, if the way chanced to be rugged, she was leaning on him. Thus he guarded her carefully till night, when he helped to lay her in the royal bed.

Now the righteous soul is our Lord's bride, and as it cannot be righteous without being in charity, neither is it His bride unless it be led apart amid those delicious perfumes whereof the Song of Songs tells us. But if a soul thus honoured commits sin, it falls into a spiritual swoon ; and this is verily an untimely accident, for who could imagine that a creature would forsake its Creator and its Sovereign Good for anything so worthless as the pleasures of sin ? Truly Heaven marvels thereat ; and had God passions like unto us, He were overwhelmed with grief, even as when He took upon Him our mortal flesh He died upon the Cross for this very thing. But now, having died once for all, He comes to the soul's rescue, and pours into it His gracious inspirations, whereby it revives and restores consciousness ; and all that without any effort of its own. He strengthens it with emotions of hope, faith, and penitence, and not merely does he lead it onwards, but He upholds it so that it scarce knows whether it is being carried or moving of itself ; even as S. Paul says, " Not I, but the Grace of God which was with me."¹ But when the soul is wholly restored by the bondage of love which God's Holy Spirit puts upon the heart, it can go by itself, in the strength of that healing love ; and then indeed it owes all glory to

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

the God Who has so strengthened it. For whether the Holy Spirit strengthens us by His inspirations or by the love He sheds within the heart; whether His succour raises and bears us, or gives us strength to go of ourselves, come what may, it is through Him that we live and move and have our being.

But that we may go on the better in God's Presence towards the end,—our salvation,—His Love succours the soul, holding it ever in His Hand; for thus He shows the exceeding sweetness of His Love, He gives the soul ever fresh confidence, He protects it from the evil tendencies and habits of past sin, and He defends and upholds it against all temptation.

We sometimes see powerful men who need being stimulated to put forth their strength, and, so to say, to be led to their work. And so God does not leave us to go forth alone, but He intreats and stimulates us, while at the same time He stimulates His own Love on our behalf, renewing in our ear such warnings as S. Paul's: "See that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain;"¹ "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men;"² "So run, that ye may obtain."³ And He is continually speaking to the ear of our heart that which He said to the Patriarch Abraham: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect."⁴

Above all, that soul which attempts any special undertaking stands in need of God's Help, for while feeble love will dispose us and give us sufficient strength for what is necessary to salvation, those who would undertake very excellent and unwonted works need to be upheld by the Hand of our Divine Lover, even as the princess of my parable, who could not go far without her lord upheld her.

Thus it was through God's Grace and Love that S. Anthony and S. Simeon Stylites led their wondrous lives, as also the Blessed Teresa when she made her vow of special obedience; S. Francis and S. Louis,

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 24.

² Gal. vi. 10.

⁴ Gen. xvii. 1.

when they undertook to cross the ocean for God's Glory ; the Blessed Francis Xavier, when he devoted his life to the conversion of the Indies ; S. Charles, when he offered up his to serve the plague-stricken ; S. Paulinus, when he sold himself to ransom the widow's son. They could never have achieved such noble undertakings if, to the charity already filling their hearts, God had not added special courage, light, and inspiration, leading them on to such extraordinary feats of spiritual strength. Remember, again, that young man of whom we read in the Gospel,¹ whom our Lord loved, and who therefore was not without charity. He had assuredly no thought of selling all he had to give to the poor, and following our Lord ; and even when the Dear Lord vouchsafed to inspire him with it, he had not courage to carry it out. For such mighty works we need not inspiration only, but strength to effect that which inspiration requires of us ; as also under the assault of special temptation we need a special and individual presence of Heavenly Aid. Therefore it is that the Church so frequently bids us cry out, "Arise, help us and deliver us !" "Make clean our hearts within us !" "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings !" "Make speed to help us, O Lord !" and the like, in order that through such prayers we may obtain grace to perform excellent and extraordinary works, as also to perform those which are ordinary with greater fervour, to resist lesser temptations more steadfastly, and to meet such as are heavier with more hearty resistance.

S. Anthony underwent the assault of a troop of demons, and after unspeakable trial and struggle, at last he beheld the roof of his cell burst asunder, and a ray of heavenly light pierced within, scattering the dark host of the enemy at once, and effacing all the wounds he had received ; whereby he recognised the special Presence of God, and turning towards the glad vision, he cried out, "Where wert Thou, O Dear Jesus, where wert Thou ? wherefore camest Thou not at first to spare me

¹ Matt. xix. 16-23.

this trial?" And the answer came from on high: "I was beside thee, Anthony, but I waited the issue of thy strife. Good and valiant soldier, I will never fail thee." Wherein lay the valour of this great spiritual warrior? He himself has recorded how, being assaulted by the devil, he began to chant the seventh verse of the 118th Psalm: "The Lord taketh my part with them that help me; therefore shall I see my desire upon mine enemies."

So, too, our Lord revealed to S. Catherine of Sienna that He was in her heart during a cruel temptation which she underwent, as a Captain in the midst of a beleaguered fortress, and that without His Succour she had been lost. It is even so with every onslaught we experience from the enemy, so that we may fitly speak like Jacob of "the Angel Which redeemed me from all evil,"¹ and say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for His Name's Sake. . . . Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever."²

CHAPTER IV.

Of Perseverance in this Holy Love.

JUST as a tender mother leads her child, upholding him when needful, and letting him go by himself where the path is easy; one while holding his hand to steady him, another carrying him in her arms; even so our Dear Lord watches tenderly over the children of His Love, leading them through difficult places, and carrying them through trials which were else unbearable. "I the Lord will hold thy right hand, saying

¹ Gen. xlviii. 16.

² Ps. xxiii.

unto thee, Fear not ; I will help thee."¹ Therefore we may boldly trust in God and His certain succour ; sure that if we act up to His Grace, He will finish the good work He has begun in us,² "for it is God Which worketh in us both to will and to do of His Good Pleasure."³

This guiding which God vouchsafes to the soul from its first beginnings of love until that final perfection which only comes with death, is what we call the great gift of final perseverance, a gift to which our Lord has attached eternal glory : "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved."⁴ In fact that gift is simply the united course of guidance, succour, and support by means of which we abide in God's Love to the end ; just as the education and upbringing of a child is simply a series of care, instruction, and assistance bestowed upon him until he attains an age when he becomes independent of all such.

Nevertheless the course of such guidance is not alike to all who persevere. With some it is very brief, as with those whose conversion immediately precedes death, *e.g.* the good thief ; or the soldier who, won by S. James's steadfast faith, professed his faith, and shared the apostle's martyrdom then and there ; or that jailer who kept the forty martyrs of Sebaste, and who, seeing one of their number falter and renounce the martyr's palm, himself took the vacant place, and became simultaneously a Christian and a martyr ; or the notary we read of in the life of S. Antony of Padua, who after a vile life died a martyr's death ; or many another we hold blessed in that they died in grace, having lived in sin. Such as these reach the haven after a brief voyage, achieving their pilgrimage with one bound, which God's Almighty Hand enables them to make so opportunely, that their enemies behold them triumphant ere yet the strife seems to have begun, conversion and perseverance in their case being one and the same.

¹ Isa. xli. 13.

³ Phil. ii. 13.

² Phil. i. 6.

⁴ Matt. x. 22.

Strictly speaking, we can scarcely call this perseverance, although it attains the same end.

With others, again, perseverance is long, *e.g.* Anna with her fourscore years, S. John the Evangelist, S. Paul the first hermit, S. Hilarion, S. Romuald, or S. Francis de Paul, and these have needed sundry manner of help, according to the nature and duration of their various pilgrimages.

Under all circumstances perseverance is the best gift we can desire in this life ; a gift, as the Council of Trent teaches, which we can seek only from God, Who Alone can strengthen those who stand and lift up them that fall. Therefore we are bound to ask it continually, using the means to win it which God has set before us : prayer, fasting, almsgiving, the Sacraments, the companionship of good men, hearing and reading God's Word. And forasmuch as the gift of prayer and devotion is freely given to all who heartily yield themselves up to God's Holy Spirit, it is in our own power to persevere. Not that I mean to say that the first springs of perseverance depend upon ourselves ; far from it, they are a precious gift of God's Mercy. But that gift is put at our disposal to use according to our will, which is certainly in our own power. For while God's Grace is necessary to a persevering will, such a will is in our power, because His Grace never fails us when our will acts up to our power. As S. Bernard says, we may all truly affirm with S. Paul that neither death nor life, nor angels nor powers, nor depth nor height can separate us from the Love of God Which is in Jesus Christ.¹ No created power can wrest us from that Holy Love, only we ourselves can of our own will forsake it ; our own will is all we have to fear. Therefore it behoves us to put all our hope in God, Who will perform that good work He has begun in us provided we do not fail Him. Do not imagine but that He Who bade the paralytic man go and sin no more² gave him abundant power of will

¹ Rom. viii. 38.

² John v. 14.

to obey the precept. He would not bid His faithful servants persevere without enabling them to do so: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;"¹ "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong;"² "So run, that ye may obtain."³ With David we must cry out, "Cast me not away in the time of age; forsake me not when my strength faileth me,"⁴ certain that if we ask the blessed gift of perseverance, He will not refuse it to us.

CHAPTER V.

The Privilege of dying in Holy Love is a special Gift of God.

WHEN at last the Heavenly King has led the soul He loves all through to the end of this life, He yet further brings it safe through the hour of death, leading it to Eternal Glory,—to the fruition of holy perseverance. And the soul overwhelmed with love for its Bridegroom, clings to the Dear Hand Which has led it, joyfully confessing that He is the Giver of all good, and has more than fulfilled Jacob's prayer that God would be with him, and keep him in the way he went, and bring him to his father's house in peace:⁵ "Thou, Lord, hast kept me in my way, Thou hast fed me with Thy Sacraments, Thou hast clothed me with the wedding garment of Thy Love, and brought me to Thy Heavenly Home.

¹ Rev. ii. 10.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 24.

⁴ Ps. lxxi. 8. S. Francis gives the old metrical version:—

"Seigneur Dieu, mon unique Espoir
Ne me vueille laisser deschoir
Au temps de ma pauvre vieillesse.
Quand le temps lassé me rendra
Et que ma vigueur defaudra,
Que ta main point ne me délaisse."

⁵ Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.

Surely Thou art my God for ever and ever !” “Thou hast holden me by my right hand . . . Thou shalt receive me with glory.”¹

Such is the order of our passage to eternal life, for which God’s Providence has from all eternity appointed the number, variety, and order of necessary graces and their interdependence.

First of all, He willed fully that notwithstanding Adam’s sin all men should be saved, but so and by such means as were fitting to their nature, gifted as it was with free-will ; that is, He willed all to be saved who would co-operate with the grace and favours He imparted to that end.

Now among these favours, calling or vocation He willed to be the first, and that to be so adapted to our free-will that we might accept or reject it at pleasure. And to those whom He foresaw would accept it He willed to supply the emotions of penitence ; and to those who seconded these emotions He willed to give holy love ; and to them He imparted the needful help to persevere ; and to those that rightly use that gracious help He determined to give final perseverance and the glorious blessedness of His Eternal Love.

Thus we can trace out the course of God’s Providence in our salvation from the first to the last step, from that fruit which is Glory to the root which is the Redemption of Christ our Saviour. For God’s Goodness gives that Glory as the result of perseverance in well-doing, perseverance in well-doing as the result of love, love coming of penitence, penitence itself of obedience to vocation, and that vocation is the result of our Lord’s Redemption, on which the whole mystic ladder of Jacob is founded ; in Heaven, where it rests on the Loving Bosom of the Eternal Father receiving His elect whom He has glorified, and on earth, where it is fixed in the pierced Side of Him Who died therefore on Mount Calvary.

The Church testifies that the effects of God’s Pro-

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 22, 23.

vidence are ruled by Him even as is their interdependence when she prays to Him as the Eternal and Omnipotent God, the Lord of the living and the dead, Who shows mercy to all those He has foreseen would become His in faith and in works ; as though acknowledging that that glory which is the crown of God's Mercy to man, is only destined for those whom Divine Wisdom foreknew would so obey their calling as to attain to that living faith which brings forth the fruit of love.

And finally, all these results depend absolutely upon the Redemption of our Saviour, Whose Merits win them for us in the strictest sense, by His loving obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross ;^{*} which is the root of all the grace we receive, we being spiritual grafts, grafted into that Stem. If when so grafted we abide in Him, we shall assuredly bring forth the fruit of the glory prepared for us by that life of grace He imparts ; but if we are as shoots broken off, *i.e.* if we resist the action of His Goodness, no wonder if we are cut off wholly, and cast into the fire as profitless branches." God has prepared Paradise for those He foreknows as His ; let us strive to be truly His in faith and in works, and He will be ours in glory. And it rests with us to be His ; for though it comes of God's Gift, He never refuses that Gift to any, but offers it freely to all who will heartily consent to receive it. See, then, how earnestly God desires that we be His, since to that end He has made Himself wholly ours, yielding up to us both His Life and His Death ; His Life, that we might be delivered from eternal death ; His Death, that we might attain eternal life. Be it ours so to live that we may be ever His in this life, and yet more for eternity.

^{*} Phil. ii. 8.

^{*} John xv. 5, 6.

CHAPTER VI.

We cannot attain to the Perfection of Unitive Love of God in this Portal Life.

"ALL rivers run unto the sea . . . unto the place whence the rivers come, thither they return again." The ocean whence they rise is also their last end, and their whole course tends solely to reunite them therewith. "Thou hast made my heart for Thyself," says S. Augustine, "and my heart knoweth no rest until it return to Thee." "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. . . . God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Nevertheless this union after which we long cannot be fully perfected in this life; we may begin to love God here, we can only love Him perfectly in the next.

The Bride says, "I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me."³ She has found Him; she feels the joy of His Presence in a thousand ways; she holds Him by means of strong, cleaving affection; she will not let Him go, but she does not seek the marriage kiss until she be with Him in her mother's house, *i.e.* in the Heavenly Jerusalem. She does not scruple to hold Him as the captive of love, Whom she can lead at her own will into that blessed resting-place, into which, nevertheless, she will be led by Him, even as Rebekah was led into Sarah's tent by Isaac.⁴ The ardent soul, in its passionate love, assumes an empire over its object, and the Bridegroom Himself avows that His Bride

¹ Eccles. i. 7.³ Cant. iii. 4.² Ps. lxxiii. 24, 25.⁴ Gen. xxiv. 67.

has "ravished His heart," binding Him as a prisoner with one lock of her hair.¹

This perfect union of the soul with God, then, will only be brought about in Heaven, at "the marriage supper of the Lamb."² In this lower life the soul is indeed the Lamb's betrothed, but not yet wedded; troth and pledges are given, but the further solemnisation waits. And therefore we may yet fall away, although there can never be any cause thereto, since the Bridegroom will never forsake us, and He can never be estranged save by our inconstancy or treachery. But once in Heaven, and the marriage celebrated, that blessed bond will be indissoluble.

Yet while waiting this joyful consummation, the Heavenly Bridegroom vouchsafes us many an intimation of His gracious Presence, for without any endearments the soul would not be drawn, nor run after the savour of His ointments.³ Therefore the Bride says, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Mouth." But these are all but foretastes of that best of all embraces which shall last for ever, compared with which all the others are as nothing, a mere shadow and token of the embrace which shall last for ever, the eternal union of the Bride and her Bridegroom.

CHAPTER VII.

The Charity of Saints in this Life may equal, or even sometimes exceed, that of the Blessed.

WHEN, the changes and chances of this life ended, the souls of the righteous come to the haven where they would be, they rise up to the highest degree of love attainable; and this final gift being bestowed as a reward of righteousness, it is not given merely in "good measure," but "pressed down and

¹ Cant. iv. 9; see Vulgate.

² Rev. xix. 9.

³ Cant. i. 3.

shaken together, and running over," as our Dear Lord says,¹ that love which is given as a reward being even greater than the ample love by which the soul was enabled to win its recompense. And not only will each individual possess more love in Heaven than he ever possessed on earth, but the smallest exercise of that love will be greater than the most abundant outpour of love here can ever be. There the saints will know no intermission in their life of love, while here even God's choicest servants, hindered and fettered by the necessities of mortal life, are fain to put up with many a distraction from their holy task. In Heaven the blessed will enjoy a love altogether steadfast, constant, unfailing, which can know no failure or slackening; their intention is ever pure and single. Who could compare a seafaring life, ever surrounded with perils and alarms, to a life spent in a royal mansion where every possible delight abounds, surpassing all that we can conceive?

There is then far more enjoyment and perfection in that holy love which the inhabitants of Paradise enjoy, than in that of pilgrims yet on earth. Nevertheless some have been so blessed as to experience a more abundant charity in this their pilgrimage than even the saints who are gathered into the Eternal Home. We cannot doubt but that the charity of S. John, and of other apostolic men, was greater, even while on earth, than that of those little ones who, dying in their first baptismal grace, have entered into eternal glory.

We do not ordinarily expect a shepherd to be more valiant than trained soldiers, yet David proved himself the better man amid the practised troops of the mighty Israelitish army. Neither is it common to find mortal men who abound more in love than those souls which have passed to life immortal; yet to some has been granted a more fervent charity even than theirs. For just as, when comparing a red-hot iron with

¹ Luke vi. 38.

a bright lamp, the iron possesses most fire and heat, while the lamp has most flame and brightness, so the babe which has entered the glorified life may have most light and glory, while S. John or S. Paul in his captivity has most fire of love and heat of affection.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Watchless Love of the Mother of God.

ABOVE all, and comparable with none, stands the Blessed Virgin Mother, Our Lady; for she is the Mother of fair Love, the "only dove," the "choice one."² It is a pious thought that at least during her last earthly days her love must have surpassed that of the Seraphim; for if "many daughters have done virtuously," surely she "excelled them all."³ All saints and angels are like to the stars in heaven, but she is "fair as the moon, clear as the sun."⁴ And even as that sweet Mother's charity exceeds that of all saints above, so I believe that she exercised it more abundantly while here on earth. The Church's tradition is that she was never guilty of venial sin, so that there was no hindrance or drawback to the progress of her love, which must have been continually increasing; she was never drawn down by any sensual desires, so that love reigned supreme within her soul. Her virginity of body and heart was even worthier than that of the angels, and her mind, knowing no distraction, cared for the things of the Lord alone, being holy both in body and spirit.⁵ And what must a mother's love, the most ardent, unwearied, and insatiable of all love, have been in the heart of such a Mother for such a Son! Even her very slumber was the sleep of love: "I sleep, but my heart waketh." Surely she slept but to gain fresh vigour to

¹ Eccles. xxiv. 18.

² Cant. vi. 9.

³ Prov. xxxi. 29.

⁴ Cant. vi. 10.

⁵ 1 Cor. vii. 34.

serve her God anew, which is a very true practice of love.* S. Augustine says that charity constrains us to cherish the body in so far as it is necessary to the fulfilling of good works, as it is a part of our individuality, and will be a sharer in our eternal blessedness. Assuredly the Christian should cherish his body as a living image of that of his Incarnate Lord, as springing from the same root, and as bound to Him by a close relationship; above all, when that relationship has been renewed by receiving the Divine Body of our Redeemer in the ever-blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, and after we have been consecrated to God in Baptism, Confirmation, and other Sacraments. And if so, how lovingly must the Blessed Virgin have regarded her own pure body; not merely inasmuch as it was gentle, humble, and pure, gifted with all conceivable sweetness, but far more because it was the earthly source of the Saviour's Body, and so inseparably united thereto.

We know that evil dreams, which are the result of unrestrained thoughts by day, are, after a fashion, sin, because they are the consequence of voluntary wrongdoing; and in like manner we may assume that such peaceful dreams as arise from holy waking thoughts are good and acceptable in God's Sight.

Thus S. Chrysostom, in one of his Homilies, speaking to his people of the great love he bore them, tells them that when the urgency of sleep closed his eyes, the force of that love opened wide the vision of his soul, and that many a time in slumber he seemed to talk with them, since the soul is wont in dreams to carry on that which chiefly occupies it while the body wakes. So that when he saw them not with his natural eyes, he yet saw them with the eyes of love. What then, O Blessed Jesus, must have been the dreams of Thy Holy Mother, when she slept, her heart waking! Surely she must often have dreamed

* "Sleep that may me more vigorous make,
To serve my God when I awake."—*Bishop Ken.*

of holding Thee within her womb, and at her to the breast ; and may be she would also dream that as once Thou didst nestle there like a tender lamb, she in her turn slept in Thy pierced Side like a dove "in the clefts of the rock ;"¹ or did she sometimes dream, like Joseph, of future glory,² when she should be "clothed with the sun,"³—that is, enveloped in the Glory of her Son ; or again, with Jacob,⁴ did she dream of the work of redemption wrought by Him for men and angels ? Who can fathom the sweetness of such sleeping visions !

Nor would I affirm that her privileged soul had no exercise of reason in sleep. Many have imagined that when Solomon dreamed his wondrous dream⁵ he had power to exercise free-will, as testified by his "wise and understanding" choice, and his admirable prayer. How much more, then, may the Mother of the True Solomon have had a reasoning faculty, her heart waking indeed while she slept ! We know that St. John was given the use of reason while yet in his mother's womb, a far greater marvel.⁶ In short, just as asbestos ever retains the fire it once possesses, so the Blessed Virgin's heart ever retained that fire of love kindled by her Son ; with this difference, that whereas though the asbestos flame cannot be extinguished, neither can it increase, the fire of her love could not cease to wax ever more and more until its perfection in Heaven. Verily she is the Mother of Pure Love, the most loving and most loved, the one only Mother of the One Only Son, the Most Loving and Most Loved.

¹ Cant. ii. 14.

⁴ Gen. xxviii.

² Gen. xxxvii.

⁵ 1 Kings iii. 5.

³ Rev. xii. 1.

⁶ Luke i. 41.

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CHAPTER IX.

What is the Union of the Blessed with God?

THAT triumphant love which the blessed enjoy in Heaven is the final, unchanging, eternal union of the soul with God. What, then, is this union?

The more our senses appreciate pleasant or excellent things, the more eagerly they seek to enjoy these. The more beautiful an object, the more earnestly the eye feeds upon it; the sweeter a sound, the more greedily the ear drinks it in; and thus everything exercises a powerful though friendly violence upon its corresponding sense, according to its intrinsic force, provided it be adapted to the capacity of the sense to enjoy. For greatly as the eye revels in light, it cannot bear to gaze upon the sun; and welcome as music is to the ear, we cannot bear it in too close a neighbourhood to the ear. So truth is the attraction of the mind which seeks above all to fathom it; and the more excellent such truth, so much the more the understanding delights in dwelling thereon. How great was the delight of those ancient philosophers who attained to such profound knowledge of Nature's truths! No earthly pleasure was so sweet to them as their beloved philosophy, for which some forsook honour, riches, and country; while of Democritus we read that he put out his eyes, depriving himself for ever of the joys of earthly sight, in order the better to study truth by spiritual light. So attractive is the knowledge of truth; and Aristotle often declares that all human bliss consists in wisdom, or the knowledge of supreme truths. But when the mind rises above natural light, and begins to perceive the sacred truths of faith, what then is the delight! The soul melts away for very bliss when it hears

that word which is "sweeter than honey to the mouth."¹

God has set His mark on all creation, so that the knowledge we attain of Him in His creatures is verily as a sight of His Footprints ; while compared with that, faith is a sight of His Very Face, which we may not yet see in the fulness of its glory, but only as Jacob beheld Him at the ford of Jabbok in "the breaking of the day," when he cried out, "I have seen God Face to face, and my life is preserved."² Oh, how lovely is that light of faith whereby we see clearly, not alone the origin and purpose of creatures, but the Eternal Birth of the Eternal Word, by Whom all things are made, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost is One God, Blessed for ever and ever ! Truly, as S. Jerome exclaims to Paula, Plato in his learning knew not this, neither Demosthenes with all his eloquence ! "Thy Word is sweeter than honey and the honey-comb !"³ "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way ?"⁴ And if God's truths are so sweet beheld as we now behold them, by the dim light of faith, what, O my God, will they be when we behold them in the full noonday brightness of Thy Glory !

The Queen of Sheba, when she came to behold the glories of Solomon, and to hear his wisdom, was altogether crushed by those marvels, and cried out, "Behold the half was not told me !"⁵ Very glorious are the truths which faith now reveals to us by hearing. But when we reach the Heavenly Jerusalem, and behold Him Who is greater than Solomon seated on the throne of His Glory, displaying the eternal secrets of His sovereign truth, with a light so bright that we shall see for ourselves that which here we believed, then what will be the joy and overwhelming gladness ! Heart of man never could conceive such blessedness : "Very excellent things are spoken of thee, O City of

¹ Ps. cxix. 103.

² Gen. xxxii. 30.

³ Ps. xix. 10.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 32.

⁵ 1 Kings x. 7.

God,"* but we had not even afar off imagined the infinite greatness of the pleasure of Thy Holy House!

CHAPTER X.

Past Earthly Longing will greatly increase the Union of the Blessed with God.

PREVIOUS longing stimulates and sharpens enjoyment attained; and the more urgent our desire, the more rapturous will our possession be. And oh! what bliss will it be to see the Face of God, the one paramount desire of the soul! Our heart is athirst, and cannot be quenched with mortal joy, which if moderate does not satisfy, if immoderate chokes us. Yet we always crave for excessive joy, and then it becomes insupportable and harmful. Men have died of joy as well as of sadness. When Alexander had conquered the world, he heard some insignificant person say that there were more worlds; and like a child crying for an apple refused him, this Alexander whom the world calls Great, fell to weeping because he could scarce hope to conquer those other worlds, since he had not yet full possession of this one! Does not such dissatisfaction in one who had achieved such vast earthly possession prove that the thirst of man's heart cannot be satiated in this life, and that the whole world will not suffice to quench it? Admirable, gracious dissatisfaction! Never, O my soul, shalt thou find rest in this world, or until thou attainest the refreshing waters of eternal life, which alone can quench thy thirst and satisfy thy longings!

Contemplate the hart of which David sings, weary with the chase, breathless, spent, plunging into the water, as though he would lose himself in its refresh-

* Ps. lxxxvii. 2.

ing depths. Even so our heart, ever unsatisfied in this life in its infinite longings, rushes to God, its Living, satisfying Fount, in the next. There, as the famished babe cleaves to its mother's breast as though it would fain absorb it, so our panting soul cleaves to God as though to be for ever absorbed in Him, and He in us!

CHAPTER XI.

The Union of the Blessed with God through His Vision.

WHEN we look upon anything, it is not actually united to our eyes, albeit present to them, but it conveys a certain image to them, which we call the sense of sight. So when we hear something, that sound is only united to our intelligence by the very subtle sense which we call hearing. Yet even the impressions of these senses arrive at our understanding by very manifold and varied processes. They begin with the external sense, passing on to that which is internal, then to the fancy, thence to the active understanding, and finally attain that which is passive, until by dint of all these stages they become purified, subtilised, and refined, so that from being merely sensible they become intelligible.

Whatever we see and hear in this mortal life is seen and heard after this fashion, even matters of faith. For, even as the mirror does not contain that which we behold therein, but only a representation thereof, which being retained by the mirror, produces in its turn a representation on the retina of the eye; so the word of faith does not contain that which it announces, but only represents it, and that representation of Divine things produces another, which our understanding, through God's Grace, accepts and receives as representing His Holy Truth, and our will embraces and rejoices

therein as a profitable and most excellent thing. So that by this means the truths set forth in God's Word are represented to the understanding as a mirror represents natural objects to the eye; wherefore S. Paul likens believing to seeing through a glass.¹ But in Heaven it will be far otherwise. There the Godhead will unite Itself to our intelligence without any intermediate sense or representation; It will join Itself thereto with such a very conscious Presence as will more than supply this. How great will be that blessedness wherein the human intelligence is united for ever to its Supreme Object, no longer in a dim representation, but in very Presence, in the fulness of Its Divine Truth and Majesty! We shall be as the very offspring of the Godhead, fed of Its Substance; and even as a mother feeds her babe not only with her milk, but that directly from her breast, so God our Father will not merely feed our intelligence with His Own very Substance, but He will Himself apply it to our understanding, no longer through any manner of representation, but direct, so that His Eternal and Paternal Substance is at once species and object to that understanding. And thus there will be a most gracious fulfilment of the promises, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her;"² "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her . . . that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. . . . Ye shall suck . . . and be dandled upon her knees."³

Nor is this merely a promise; we have the firstfruits thereof in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, that perpetual feast of Heavenly Grace, since therein we receive the Lord's Blood in His Body, and His Body in the Blood; which are applied to us, His Substance to our substance, that we may know how He will apply His Divine Essence to us in the feast

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² Hos. ii. 14.

³ Isa. lxvi. 10-12.

of Eternal Glory. Not but that we really receive it now, only hidden under the sacramental species, whereas in Heaven He will give Himself to us unveiled, and we shall see Him Face to face as He is.


CHAPTER XII.

The Eternal Union of the Blessed with God through the Vision of the Eternal Birth of the Son of God.

O HOLY Spirit, Eternal Love of the Father and of the Son, be merciful to my weakness !

We shall see God then, Face to face, beholding the Divine Essence in a very real Presence, with all Its Infinite Beauty, Power, Goodness, Wisdom and all other perfections. We shall realise the infinite knowledge of His Own Beauty which the Father has from all eternity, and which He expressed by the Word, Which, comprehending and representing all the Father's Perfection, could be no other than One with Him in the Godhead, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Thus we behold the external and glorious generation of the Divine Word, by which He was eternally born in the Image and Likeness of God, a real and natural Likeness, without external accidents, inasmuch as all that is of God is substance, while all is interior, not exterior. Of one Substance with the Father ; the Godhead, Glory, and Majesty all one, the Persons distinct. For how could God the Son be the true Image of His Father, if He did not possess the Father's Perfections? and how could He possess Infinite Perfections without being Himself Infinitely Perfect? and how could He be Infinitely Perfect, unless He were God? and how could He be God, and not be One with the Father?

So, then, God the Son is One with the Father in



Substance, not confounding the Persons ; He is of the Father, not made nor created, but begotten. The Father spoke, and the Word was. "The dew of Thy Birth is of the womb of the morning."

When S. Bernard was a boy at Chatillon-sur-Seine, he was waiting one Christmas Eve in church for the service to begin, and falling asleep, he beheld a very clear vision of the Birth of the Son of God, "coming forth as a Bridegroom out of His chamber ;"² and so mightily was he filled with joy and spiritual delight thereat, that henceforth, albeit continually sucking up the honey of Divine consolation, the Christmas solemnities had ever a very special attraction and meaning for him. Now if a mere mystical vision of the temporal Birth of the Son of God could so greatly kindle the heart of a child, what will it be when our hearts, enlightened by Heaven's Own Light, shall see the Eternal Generation of the Son of God, Light of light, Very God of Very God ! Surely the soul so favoured will be drawn with incomprehensible attraction to that wondrous Grace, and will abide for ever inseparably united to It.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Union of the Blessed with God through the Vision of the Holy Ghost's Procession.

HOW could it be but that the Father, beholding the Infinite Beauty and Excellence of His Essence in His Son, and the Son beholding the Father as the Source whence that Beauty rises, must be united in an Infinite Love ? But this Love is not like the love of creatures, either mutual or to their Creator. The love of creatures comes from manifold emotions ; that of the Godhead is the influence of one Breath of Father and Son, and from that inspiration

¹ Ps. cx. 3.

² Ps. xix. 5.

the Holy Spirit proceeds. David says, "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard, even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing."¹ And if human love is so beautiful and glorious a sight, what will it be to behold the mutual Love of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

S. Gregory Nazianzen says that the great love and friendship between him and S. Basil was renowned all over Greece; and Tertullian records that even the heathen marvelled at the more than brotherly love of the early Christians. How marvellous, how glorious, then, the Eternal Love of the Godhead! Surely we shall be lost in the depths of wonder and marvel in the contemplation of that most glorious beatific vision!

CHAPTER XIV.

*The Holy Sight of Glory will tend to unite the
Blessed with God.*

THUS our human intelligence will behold the Divine Essence without intermediary or veil, but not without some strengthening light enabling it to perceive and face so great and dazzling a Glory. The bat has sight suited for the dim twilight, but could not bear the brightness of noonday; and so we can perceive God's natural truths, and even to some extent His Supernatural Graces, by the light of faith, but we cannot attain to the vision of His Very Self. Therefore in His Eternal Love and Wisdom He prepares our mental capacity, strengthens and renders it fit to receive a vision so far exceeding our natural capabilities. The sun only reaches our eyes when veiled by its rays; but the illustration fails, in that whereas the natural sunshine dazzles our feeble sight, the sunshine

¹ Ps. cxxxiii.

of God's Glory will so strengthen and perfect our spiritual gaze that we shall be able to fix it upon Him in all His brightness without being blinded thereby.¹

Just as God has given us the light of reason whereby to see Him as the Author of nature, and the light of faith by which to know Him as the Source of grace, so He will give us the light of glory by which to behold Him as the Fountain of eternal life and blessing; a Fountain Which we shall not then behold afar off as now by faith, but Which we shall see by the light of glory, and into Which we shall be plunged for ever. Pliny says that those divers who seek pearls fill their mouths with oil before plunging into the sea, so that by means of its spread they may see more clearly beneath the waters. And when the happy soul plunges into the ocean of God's Essence, He will shed the sacred light of glory around, so that it shall see clearly amid "the light which no man can approach unto,"² and thus by the brightness of His Own Glory we shall be enabled to scan the brightness of the Godhead. "With Thee is the well of Life, and in Thy Light we shall see light."³

CHAPTER XV.

**There will be sundry Degrees in the Union of
the Blessed with God.**

NOW this light of glory will regulate the sight and contemplation of the blessed, and according as we have less or more of that holy brightness, we shall see less or more clearly and blessedly that Godhead

¹ "These eyes, that, dazzled now and weak,
At glancing motes in sunshine wink,
Shall see the King's full Glory break,
Nor from the blissful vision shrink."—*Keble*.

² 1 Tim. vi. 16.


³ Ps. xxxvi. 9.

wherein we shall attain to various degrees of glory. All souls in Paradise will behold all that Godhead, but none will behold It in Its entirety. For God, being One and Indivisible, cannot be seen, unless it be all seen; but inasmuch as God is Infinite, limitless, boundless in His Perfections, no capacity save His Own, which is Infinite, can entirely comprehend or perceive that Goodness which is Infinitely Essential and Essentially Infinite.

The visible sun, which is finite and limited, is all seen by us who gaze; but it is never totally seen by one or all. So with all our senses. Of many who listen to sweet music, while all hear, some do not hear so well, or with so great delight as others, according as their perceptions are more or less delicate. The manna of old was sweet to all who ate it, yet diversely so according to their appetites, while none fully tasted it, because it had as many flavours as there were tastes among the Israelites. So in Heaven we shall see and enjoy the Godhead fully, but none will see or enjoy Him wholly, for His Infinity will ever possess infinitely more excellence than we have capacity to appreciate; and we shall find joy and rest in knowing that however fully we satiate every longing of our heart in the enjoyment of His Boundless Goodness, still there must ever remain an infinitude of perfection which none save God Himself can ever know or comprehend.

Thus the fish enjoy the vast space of ocean, yet none ever see all shores, or shoot through all waters. Birds have the vast atmosphere at will, but none has ever winged its way through all space. So our souls will swim in the boundless ocean, or fly through the measureless space of the Divine Presence in infinite bliss, but their capacity for bliss must ever remain immeasurably below the Infinitude of that Presence.

They will marvel alike at the Infinite Beauty they behold, and at the depths thereof which are beyond



their ken. How marvellous is that they see ! yet how far more marvellous that which they see not ! Yet they are absolutely satisfied with that which they behold, and content therewith, the knowledge of that which they cannot attain to being a mere subject of further admiration and adoration to them as they fall down and worship the Infinite Beauty of their Infinite God.

BOOK IV.

THE DECAY AND RUIN OF CHARITY.

CHAPTER I.

We may lose the Love of God, so long as we are in this Life.

I AM not here addressing those rare and exceptional souls whom God so specially sustains in His Love that they are in no danger of falling away, but rather ordinary mortal men, to whom the Holy Spirit speaks in words of warning: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;"¹ "Hold that fast which thou hast;"² "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."³ And He puts into their mouths such prayers as "Cast me not away from Thy Presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me;"⁴ "Lead us not into temptation,"⁵ in order that they may "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,"⁶ knowing that they are not more unchangeably safe against losing God's Love, than were the fallen angels or Judas, who having received, lost it and themselves; or than Solomon, of whom, having once forsaken it, we know not whether he be saved or lost; or than Adam, Eve, David, or Peter, who being sons of salvation yet fell away for a time from that love without which there is no salvation. Alas! who shall presume to say that he will hold fast through the voyage of life, when so many worthier than he have come to shipwreck?

¹ 1 Cor. x. 12.

⁴ Ps. li. 11.

² Rev. iii. 11.

⁵ Matt. vi. 13.

³ 2 Peter i. 10.

⁶ Phil. ii. 12.

Perhaps you will reply by asking how it is possible for any soul that possesses the love of God to lose it, since where love is, surely there sin will be resisted? "Love is strong as death, hard as hell:"¹ how then can the powers of death or hell, which are sin, conquer love which is strong as they, and more powerful in right and Divine might? How can a reasonable soul which has once tasted the boundless sweetness of Divine Love voluntarily quaff the bitter waters of sin? Even a babe, brought up on milk and honey, will turn with disgust and tears from wormwood or camomile; how then can the soul which has experienced the Goodness of the Creator, turn from it towards the misery of creature things?

The very heavens are "astonished and horribly afraid,"² and the "ambassadors of peace weep bitterly"³ at the sight of this strange weakness of human nature, which forsakes what is so precious for that which is worthless. But did you ever watch a certain little mystery in common things, which to many is incomprehensible? I mean how, when a full cask is opened, the wine will not flow until some air is let in from above; which is not the case with a cask not perfectly full, out of which the wine flows directly that it is opened. Now verily in this mortal life, although our souls may be well filled with heavenly love, they are never so full but that it may escape through temptation. But in Heaven, where the Beauty and Goodness of God will wholly engross and absorb the will so that it is utterly full, nothing will ever be able to cause one single drop of its Divine contents to flow out. Nor were it possible to let in the smallest draught, *i.e.* to surprise that will, for it is fixed in the Will of God.

Thus wine which is separated from its lees may be

¹ We lose this expression in the English version; in the Vulgate it is "*Quia fortis est ut mors dilectio, dura sicut inferno æmulatio*" (Cant. viii. 6).

² Jer. ii. 12.

³ Isa. xxxiii. 7.

warranted not to ferment, but so long as it is on the lees it is liable thereto. And while we are in this life we are subject to the hindrance of many evil tempers and faults, and consequently liable to be drawn away from our highest love. But in Heaven, where we shall come to the feast described by the Prophet Isaiah, whereof the "wines on the lees are well refined,"¹ we shall no longer be liable to change, but inseparably united to our Sovereign Good. Here, amid these earthly shadows, we fear to mistake some unreality for the Bridegroom; but when we find Him in Heaven, resting in His noontide Glory,² there will be no more mistake. His Light will be too bright, and we too close to His Love, ever to wander more.

We shall be like coral, which while in its native ocean is as a pliable plant, but once taken out, it becomes as stone, and its pale tints grow rosy red. So we in this our native earth are beset with changes and chances, God's Love sustaining us, earthly love tempting us. But once go forth from this life, and the pale tint of fearful hope will change to the rosy brightness of unchangeable joy; we can never falter more, but shall be for ever fixed in the strength of Eternal Love.

It is impossible to see God and not love Him. But here below, where we only see Him by faith, "as through a glass darkly,"³ many other objects intrude, and, like "the little foxes, spoil our vines."⁴ In a word, possessing love, our free-will is clothed with the wedding garment, which it may always retain if it persevere in well-doing, or which it may lay aside through sin.

¹ Isa. xxv. 6.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² Cant. i. 7.

⁴ Cant. ii. 15.

CHAPTER II.

How the Soul's Love grows cold.

SOMETIMES our vital energies forsake certain members of the body, which consequently become powerless and torpid, yet so long as the heart fails not, life will endure. Even so love may be so spent and exhausted in the heart as scarce to give any token, and yet reign supreme in the higher being. This is chiefly when a multitude of venial sins smother the fire of love, although it is not actually extinguished. For just as the diamond hinders the magnet from attracting iron, but the attraction is renewed directly you remove the diamond; so venial sin, while it does not altogether destroy love, yet paralyses it, and renders it barren and powerless.

Of a truth venial sin does not altogether upset the main resolution of charity, to love God above all things; but it draws us dangerously from the Creator to the creature, and leads us to linger too much about earthly things, although we do not altogether forsake those which are heavenly. It hinders without wholly turning aside, and creature love will never be destroyed by it.

God rebuked the Bishop of Ephesus for having "left his first love."¹ It is not said that he was loveless, but only that his love was no longer what it had been, ready, fervent, effectual; just as we say of any one that he is not what he once was,—from cheerful, vigorous, and friendly, he has become dull, lazy, and cross. We do not question that materially he is the same, but his ways and doings are changed. And our Lord has said that in the latter days "the love of many shall wax cold,"² *i.e.* it shall not be bold and daring, because the heart is fearful and trembling. Truly, "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin;"³ but sin does

¹ Rev. ii. 4.² Matt. xxiv. 12.³ James i. 15.

not always "bring forth death,"—only when, as the Apostle says, it is "finished," which exactly defines the difference between venial and mortal sin.

Nevertheless venial sin is sin, and consequently opposed to love, in that it is contrary to the actions and progress, and even to the intention of love, which is that all our acts should be referred to God, whereas venial sin refers them elsewhere, forgetting God and His Will. When a tree has been battered by the storm, we say there is nothing left, meaning that no fruit is left, though the tree be there; and so when love is shattered by venial sin, it suffers inasmuch as it is deprived of works, which are its fruits. Cleaving to sin led to "holding the truth in unrighteousness" among the heathen, so that "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God."¹ Their natural light was not extinguished, but became unfruitful. So venial sin does not extirpate love, but binds it hand and foot like a slave. Such sins bind us overmuch to the enjoyment of the creature, and deprive us of that familiarity with God which real love promotes. And so we lose that inward help which is as the vital force of the soul, and a spiritual paralysis ensues, which, if not cured, will end in death. For charity is a living principle which cannot be long inactive and live. The Fathers have likened it to Rachel, crying out, "Give me children, or else I die."²

We are seldom without temptation in this life. And those who are slothful, and addicted to self-pleasing, let fall their arms, and do not keep watch over charity; so that they are easily surprised, and fall into mortal sin, for which venial sins pave the way. Therein like to him of old who, carrying a calf day by day, went on till he was amazed to find that the creature had become an ox, while he perceived not its growth. So he who yields to his evil passions in trifles is led on; the irritable man becomes furious, the exaggerator a liar. And as we say of one who is very weak that

¹ Rom. i. 18-21.

² Gen. xxx. 1.

there is no life in him, because it is so frail, in like manner we may say of those slothful souls which are given up to earthly things that they have no love, since what little they have seems about to melt away.

CHAPTER III.

How we forsake Divine for Earthly Love.

THE process by which we forsake God for His creature is this: We do not love God unremittingly, all the rather that in this mortal life charity is a matter of habit, which, as philosophers say, we use at pleasure, and never against our will. So when we do not exercise that habit, when we let ourselves be distracted from the practice of Divine Love, or are slothful or negligent therein, then we are liable to the assaults of evil, and are easily surprised by temptation. And albeit the habit of charity abide in us, and fulfil its office in prompting us to reject evil suggestions, yet it will only urge us to resistance in proportion as we second it, as is the way with most habits. So that being altogether free, and the unlawful object having a strong hold upon the heart, we cling to it by an excessive complacence, which grows until it is very hard to shake off, and is like those thorns of which our Lord spoke which choke the good seed of grace and heavenly love. It was thus with our first mother Eve, whose fall began by trifling with the Serpent, being amused by his promises of enlightenment, and by gazing on the forbidden fruit; so that complacence growing into amusement, and that in its turn feeding complacence, she became so entangled that she fell into grievous sin, and led Adam into the same.

You have watched a pigeon circling in the air, displaying the beauty of its plumage, and the hawk

taking advantage of its vanity to swoop upon it, which would not happen if the pigeon flew straight on. Even so, if we did not trifle with the vanity of earthly pleasure, but, inspired by charity, were content to fly straight on where it directs, we should never be the victims of evil suggestions or temptations. But forasmuch as, seduced by self-conceit, we are absorbed by self and by creature love, we are taken by surprise, and captured by the ever-watchful enemy. God does not shield us from all temptation in order that our love may be strengthened by resistance, and so fighting may be victorious and triumphant. But we are apt to receive temptation complacently, because our natural inclination to what is good lays us open to the snares of whatever has a fair appearance, and temptation is very prone to come disguised with some such bait. It may be what the world calls honour, tempting us with "the pride of life ;" or some sensual attraction, leading to the "lust of the flesh ;" or some worldly gain, inducing the "lust of the eyes."¹ But if our faith, which is able to distinguish between real and unreal good, was kept on the alert, it would be a safe sentinel to charity, and would give speedy notice when evil comes under the semblance of good, so that charity might repulse it vigorously. But because our faith is apt to slumber, or at least to grow inattentive, we are surprised by temptation, which seduces our senses, and they kindle the lower being to rebellion, and then too often the superior being yields, and, falling into sin, loses charity.

This was the course of Absalom's rebellion against his father David : putting forward what seemed rightful propositions until he had deluded the Israelites thoroughly, and they were then easily led on to rebellion, until David was constrained to leave Jerusalem weeping, leaving no one of weight behind, save Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Now Zadok was a seer, or prophet.²

¹ 1 John ii. 16.

² 2 Sam. xv.

Just so self-love takes advantage of our inattentive or slumbering faith, and allures us with fair-seeming but empty hopes, seduces our senses and imagination, and so forces our free-will that at length we are led on to active rebellion against the holy Love of God, which then, like David, goes forth with all its followers, *i.e.* with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the inseparable companions of love, and nought of weight remains in the Jerusalem of the soul save Zadok the seer—that is to say, the gift of faith, which is able to show us things eternal—and Abiathar, *i.e.* the gift of hope, both dejected and downcast, yet upholding the ark of the covenant in us, *i.e.* the quality and title of Christian acquired in baptism.

What a grievous sight to the Angels of peace when they see the Holy Spirit and His Love go forth from our sin-stricken souls! Verily I believe that could they weep they would shed many tears, and join with the lamentation of Jeremiah when, sitting on the threshold of the deserted temple, he gazed upon the ruins of the Holy City: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! . . . from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed!"¹

CHAPTER IV.

Divine Love may be lost in a Moment.

THAT love of God which moves us to indifference to self makes us citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem; that love of self which renders us indifferent to God makes us slaves of Babylon. Now the steps by which we arrive at this neglect of God are very gradual; but no sooner is it reached, than in one moment holy charity leaves us, or, more accurately speaking, it dies out. Yes, verily; for in such neglect it is that mortal sin consists, and one mortal sin drives

¹ Lam. i. 1, 6.

out charity from the soul, because it breaks the bond of union between the soul and God, which is obedience and submission to His Will. And just as the human heart cannot be divided and live, so charity, which is the heart of the soul and the soul of the heart, cannot ever be wounded and not killed; just as it is said that the pearl, being formed of heavenly dew, is destroyed if the tiniest drop of sea-water penetrates its shell. Man's life is extinguished—not gradually, but at once—when any injury affects a vital part of the body; and thus when the heart is so vitally injured by passion that charity ceases to reign therein, it departs, since so noble is its nature, that it cannot cease to reign without ceasing to exist.

Those habits which we form in mere human matters are not overthrown by a single contradictory act. No one would say that one fit of intemperance made an intemperate man, or that a painter was no artist because some one work was a failure. All such habits are formed by continuity of action, and are lost by the like. But charity, which is "spread in our hearts" in one moment by the Holy Ghost, when we possess the requisite qualification, is taken away as instantaneously when, turning from that obedience of will which we owe to God, we consent to the rebellion and disloyalty which tempts us.

It is true that charity goes on increasing and being perfected according as by good works and duly received Sacraments we make room for it; yet it does not in like manner gradually dwindle, for we cannot lose any without losing all. And herein it reminds me of that famous ivory statue of Minerva wrought in Athens by Phidias, on the buckles of which, amid the battles of giants and Amazons, the sculptor introduced his own likeness so skilfully, that Aristotle tells us it was impossible to deface that ever so little without totally destroying the whole statue. Even so, although God's Holy Spirit leads the soul on to ever higher degrees of that love which He has planted in it, yet inasmuch

as the resolution to put God's Will before all else is the essential of holy love, that which creates the very likeness of the Divine Sculptor, if it be touched, charity falls at once shattered.

This preference of God above all else is the darling child of love. And if the Egyptian Hagar could not bear to see her child perish,¹ but "went a good way off," who can wonder if Charity Divine cannot bear to see the death of her child, *i.e.* a firm resolution never to offend God? So that as man's free-will consents deliberately to sin, thereby slaying this holy resolve, charity dies too, crying out with Hagar, "Let me not see the death of the child!" There is a precious stone called *prassius* which grows dim in the presence of any poison; and in likewise the soul loses its brightness and beauty at the approach of any of those sins whereof it is written, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."²

CHAPTER V.

The only Cause of Failure and Blackness in Charity lies in Man's Will.

JUST as it were a bold impiety to attribute those fruits of Divine Love which the Holy Spirit works in us to the innate powers of our own will, so were it no less impious to attribute our graceless failure in love to any shortcomings of God's Goodness or Help. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!"³ Our Lord came to send the fire of Divine Love upon earth; He prepared a light to lighten all men.⁴ He is "not willing that any should perish,"⁵ but that all should "come unto the knowledge of the truth."⁶ He came into the world "that we might receive the adoption of

¹ Gen. xxi. 16.

² Ezek. xviii. 4.

³ Hos. xiii. 9.

⁴ Luke ii. 31.

⁵ 2 Peter iii. 9.

⁶ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

sons,"¹ and the Wise Man expressly bids us, "Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away."² So the Council of Trent teaches that Divine Grace is never wanting to those who do their best, seeking God's Help; that God never forsakes those whom He has justified, unless they forsake Him; so that unless they reject grace, they are certain of glory.

In S. John's words, Christ is "the true Light, Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."³

It fell out one summer's day that a number of travellers, weary with their journey, fell asleep beneath the shadow of a tree; and while they slept the sun, rising higher, fell in all the power of noon upon their eyelids, and roused them. Then certain of the travellers rising up, went forward and accomplished their journey; but others there were who merely turned their backs to the sun, and pulled their hats over their eyes, sleeping on till, being overtaken by night, they wandered helpless, the prey of forest wolves. Now tell me, did not those who arrived happily at the end of their journey owe their welfare to the sun, or, to speak as Christians, to the sun's Creator? Surely, for they had not waked save through its light and warmth. Truly they did not resist that light when it stole into their eyes, or that warmth which roused them from sleep. On the other hand, those wanderers in the wood, had they any right to cry out that it was the sun's fault that they too were not safe at their journey's end? Who but would answer that the sun had done alike for all, the same light and warmth touched them all; but these last refused to yield to the sun's influence, while their comrades obeyed its summons.

Well now, all men are as travellers in this life, and for the most part we voluntarily fall into the sleep of sin; then God, the true Sun of Righteousness, sheds the bright rays of His Blessings and inspirations upon us, and why do they not attract us more and more

¹ Gal. iv. 5.

² Ecclus. xv. 11.

³ John i. 9.

frequently? Surely they who are awakened and follow that leading have every reason for thankfulness, but not for vainglory. They may rejoice, indeed, because they possess so great a gift, but they may not glory therein, because it is the free gift of God, Who claims the glory while He gives them the enjoyment thereof. But as to those who sleep on in the sleep of sin, well indeed may they weep and lament, but they have no right to complain save of themselves for having despised and rejected light and resisted inspiration, so that whatever evil or destruction comes upon them, they have wrought it themselves.

It is recorded that when the Japanese complained to their Apostle S. Francis Xavier that God, while doing so much for other nations, had forgotten their ancestors, not having revealed Himself to them; the Saint replied that God's natural law was so firmly implanted in every heart, that if their ancestors had but heeded it they would have been enlightened, but that neglecting it was at their own peril. Which reply was altogether in the same spirit as that of S. Paul when he says of the Gentiles that "they were without excuse, because that when they knew God they glorified Him not as God."¹ Woe indeed to those who will not acknowledge that their misfortune arises from their own fault!

CHAPTER VI.

Whatever Love we bear to God is His Gift.

MAN'S love of God derives its origin, increase, and perfection from God's Eternal Love to man. This is the universal teaching of the Church, which jealously sets before us that our salvation, and all means thereto, come of the sole Mercy of the Redeemer; so that all honour and glory are due to Him Alone in

¹ Rom. i. 20, 21.

Heaven or earth. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" S. Paul asks, speaking of the gifts of wisdom, eloquence, and the like; "now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"¹ Truly we have received all things of God, and still more than all else the supernatural gifts of holy love. And if we have received them, why should we take any self-glorification from them?

Surely if any one were to boast because he had made some advance in the love of God, we should remind him that he would have grovelled in sin, without energy or strength to come forth, had not God in His Mercy helped him, saying, "Open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it,"² pouring in His gracious inspirations, and strengthening His feeble servant till he should attain to the living power of love. How then, frail man, darest thou boast thyself? Thou didst consent; thy free-will followed the Heavenly leading. But what more is this than receiving Divine Grace without resistance? And the very power to receive, the very consent of which ye boast, were both God's gift. Had God not prepared thee, thou hadst not appreciated His Goodness, nor consented to His Love,—thou hadst not had one good thought. He gave life and action to thine heart, and unless His Generosity had kindled and stimulated thy free-will, it had profited thee nothing. Verily, in consenting thou didst co-operate with His Grace; but know that that co-operation was conceived of grace as well as of thy free-will, and that but for grace preparing and filling thy heart, thou hadst had neither power nor will so to co-operate.

Were it not monstrous, O wretched man, for thee to claim any glory in thy own conversion because thou hast not rejected inspiration? It is as though a robber or a despot boasted that he had given life to those from whom he refrained to take it; and to imagine that thou hast given effect and life to God's inspirations because thou hast not positively resisted them, is no

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

² Ps. lxxxi. 11.

less monstrous and impious. We may hinder inspiration, but we cannot get it for ourselves ; it derives all its power and virtue from God's Goodness, which is its source ; not from man's will, which is its object. That princess of whom I spoke, had she boasted of the virtue of the cordial which restored her as her own, we should have rebuked her. She might truly have refused to swallow the remedy, but she contributed nothing to the efficacy of what was offered her. She did but consent to receive it ; nor would she have done even that unless the king had invited her to do so ; nor would she have swallowed it unless he had poured it into her mouth. Were it not, then, the height of ingratitude to assume to herself any credit for that which she owed solely to her bridegroom ?

The little fish called *Remora* has the faculty of stopping a ship at full sail, but it has no power to set it in motion. It can hinder movement, but cannot impart it. Our free-will can hinder or stop the course of inspiration, and when the favouring breeze of grace fills our sails we can refuse our consent ; but when our ship rides the waves prosperously, it is not that we raise the favouring breeze, or give the impulse, but merely that we receive Heaven's prospering gale, consent to its action, and let ourselves advance without resistance. It is God's inspiration which brings to bear that happy influence upon our free-will by which it both perceives the beauty of holiness, and is kindled, encouraged, and stimulated, so as to turn with pleasure to that which is good.

Heaven makes ready the sweet spring dew, and the mother-of-pearl open their shells, and receiving its drops, they become pearls ; but those shells which remain closed do not prevent the dewdrops from falling *on* them but only *in* them, Heaven sending its precious dews to both alike. Wherefore, then, has one produced its pearl, and not the other ? Heaven was as generous to the barren shell, but it refused Heaven's gift, remaining closed. And the shell which bore the

pearl has nought save what it received. Even its power to open and receive that sweet dew was given by the soft warm sun-rays which attracted it to the surface. If then we possess any love for God, to Him be all the glory and honour Who has kindled it in us, for without Him it had not been ; ours be the profit and the duty. Even so does He order things : He gives us the fruit of His gifts, and takes the glory and praise to Himself ; and verily, since we are all nought save by His Grace, it beseems us to be nought save for His Glory.

CHAPTER VII.

It is our Part to shun Idle Curiosity, and humbly acquiesce in God's All-wise Providence.

THE mind of man is so weak, that when he seeks too curiously to pry into the causes and reasons of God's Will, he entangles himself in a network of difficulties whence he cannot extricate himself. Like smoke, rising he becomes subtilised, and so is dispersed. By dint of striving inquisitively to penetrate Divine mysteries men "become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart darkened ; professing themselves to be wise, they become fools."¹ Above all, this applies to what concerns God's Providence in the variety of means by which He draws us to His Holy Love, and so to eternal glory. Our presumption continually leads us to inquire why God gives more means of grace to some than to others ; why He did not do those wonders in Tyre and Sidon which He worked in Chorazin and Bethsaida,² if they would have so greatly profited thereby ; in short, why He draws one rather than another to His Love ?

But of a truth, we should never suffer our mind to wander thus idly, or seek to find a better explanation

¹ Rom. i. 21, 22.

² Matt. xi. 21.

of God's Will than that it *is* His Will, which is the best of all reasons, the measure of all good, the law of all truth. And although the Holy Spirit speaking in Inspired Scriptures from time to time gives us all the explanation we can require as to His providential dealings with men with respect to His Love and their own salvation, at the same time He repeatedly teaches us to give all due honour to His Will, adoring it first and last, without questioning His purposes, into which we have no right to intrude. Surely if men are bound so to reverence the decrees of an earthly tribunal as to believe them right and reasonable, although unable to perceive their full motives, far more they are bound to adore the justice and goodness of God's loving Providence, overruling all.

Thus continually we find the reason why God rejected the Jews set forth in Holy Scripture. SS. Paul and Barnabas declared, "Seeing ye put the Word of God from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."¹ And any one who will calmly study the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans will see clearly that it was not without reason that God's Will rejected the Jewish nation; but nevertheless man's judgment ought not to seek to penetrate this reason, but confine itself simply to reverence for God's decree, in admiring love for its justice and equity, and loving admiration of its incomprehensible depth. So the Apostle winds up his long discourse saying, "O the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His Judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the Mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?"² thereby teaching us, that while God does all things with infinite wisdom and reason, man not being admitted into His counsels, which are far above our understanding, we must accept, without seeking to understand them.

¹ Acts xiii. 46.

² Rom. xi. 33, 34.

S. Augustine teaches this over and over again :
 " No man cometh, unless drawn. Whom He draweth,
 and whom draweth not, why He draweth one and
 draweth not another, wish not thou to judge if thou
 wish not to err. Once for all, take and understand.
 Art thou not drawn ? pray that thou mayest be drawn."¹
 " Surely it sufficeth to the Christian living by faith,
 and as yet not seeing what is perfect, but knowing in
 part only, to know and believe that God delivers no
 man from condemnation save by the free Mercy of
 Jesus Christ our Lord ; neither condemns any save
 by His most just truth in the same Jesus Christ our
 Lord. But as for knowing why He delivereth one
 rather than the other, let him who may seek to fathom
 God's Judgments, but let him beware of the precipice,
 for God's decrees are not unjust because secret."²
 " Wherefore delivereth He these rather than those ?
 First of all, we answer, ' Nay but, O man, who art thou
 that repliest against God ? ' ³ ' His Judgments are
 unsearchable. ' ⁴ And we say further, ' Seek not out
 the things that are too hard for thee, neither search
 the things that are above thy strength ; ' ⁵ for He
 showeth not mercy to those whom, in His truth, which
 is far above human thought, He judgeth not worthy
 of His favour. " ⁶

We have seen twins born, one whereof lived and
 was baptized, while the other lost its material life be-
 fore receiving regeneration ; thus one was an inheritor
 of the Kingdom of Heaven, the other not so. Where-
 fore did God's Providence so order it ? We can only
 say that God does not generally interfere with the
 natural course of events, and that if one child was
 vigorous and the other too weak to come alive into
 the world, He did not hinder the course of these
 natural events, and therefore the one child was
 deprived of baptism. And this answer is substantial.
 But as S. Paul and S. Augustine teach, we ought not

¹ Hom. xxvi. on S. John.

² Ep. 105.

³ Rom. ix. 20.

⁴ Rom. xi. 33.

⁵ Eccclus. iii. 21.

⁶ " De Bono Persev."

to trifle with such speculations, knowing that God hides from us reasons which He will make known hereafter. "Then," says S. Augustine, "it will no longer be a secret why one rather than another was chosen, both seeming alike in position, nor why miracles were not displayed to those who, seeing them, would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, but to those who would not believe." And elsewhere: "It is neither possible to understand nor lawful to inquire why He withholds one and not another. Enough to know that it is of Him that the one standeth, and not of Him that the other falleth; beyond all is hidden from man's understanding, at least from mine own."

Surely this is the truest philosophy on such a subject. And I have ever greatly admired the learned modesty of S. Bonaventura in his discourse of the reason wherefore God's Providence destines the elect to eternal life. "May be," he says, "it is foreseeing the good deeds he will perform, not of himself, but through God's Will; but as to discerning what good deeds are the motive of such grace, I neither know nor would inquire,—it is not fitting, and I were sure to err. We can neither discover the true reason or the true motive of God's Will. For, as says S. Augustine, although the truth thereof is sure, it is far distant from us, and we can know nothing thereof save by His revelation to Whom all things are known. And since it is not profitable to our salvation that we understand such secrets, but better that we be ignorant thereof, God has not willed to reveal them; nor did even His chosen Apostle presume to investigate them, but bears witness to the shortcomings of our understanding, exclaiming, 'O the depth of the riches of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Loving Submission which we owe to the Decrees of God's Providence.

BE it ours humbly to adore the depth of God's Knowledge which the Apostle fathoms not, but only worships, when he cries out thus: "O the depth of the Wisdom of God!" "Who can count the sand of the seashore or the drops of rain?" exclaims S. Gregory Nazianzen; "or who can fathom His Wisdom, by which He has created all things, and governs them according as He will? Suffice it that with the Apostle we admire, not grappling with the difficulty there." The purposes of God's Will cannot be fathomed by our mind until we see Him Face to face Who "reacheth from one end to another mightily, and doth sweetly order all things,"¹ Who "can do all things,"² Who "in wisdom has made them all."³

How often we fail to understand mere human works, or the cunning of the artificer, which he, nevertheless, understands perfectly! Nor are such earthly works bad or ill done although we understand them not. Go into a clockmaker's shop, and you will find a clock no bigger than an orange, yet containing one or two hundred parts, some composing the time-keeper, others the striking and alarum. You will find wheels turning this way or that, the balance movement, and springs, and you must needs marvel at the art which has been able so precisely to adapt all these works, yet all the while you do not know what each part is, or how it works, unless the artificer shows you; you are only aware generally that all have their proper place in the clock. A wild Indian will amuse himself for days together with a clock, watching for the hours to strike, and unable to imagine how it happens, yet

¹ Wisd. viii.

² Wisd. xi. 23.

³ Ps. civ. 24.

not the less believing it to be the work of thought and skill, and reverencing those who can regulate such a machine as possessing superhuman gifts. Even so we gaze upon the universe as upon a clock composed of so many works and movements that we are fain to marvel. And while we know generally that each is designed to set forth the Power of God or the marvels of His Goodness, we yet cannot pretend to know the precise purpose of each movement, or why it is what it is, unless the Divine Artificer shows us ; nor does He vouchsafe to show us this till such time as in Heaven He will open our eyes to all the marvels of His Love, and show us how all that happened here worked together for our everlasting good.

S. Gregory Nazianzen says that we are like one troubled with dizziness, who fancies that all things are turning round, when in reality it is his own brain which turns. So when we come across things inexplicable to our mind, we are apt to fancy that they happen by chance because we know not their cause. Rather let us believe that God, the Father and Maker of all, exercises His providential care over all, especially over all that happens to us and those around us, even though our life be beset with strange events which we cannot explain ; so that while unable to comprehend, we may at least revere God's surpassing Wisdom, the more that among men what is easily perceived is easily contemned, but the harder anything is to be understood, the more they are wont to admire it. Truly the dealings of God's Providence were low indeed could our feeble minds appreciate them, and they were less lovely and less majestic if they were nearer to our level.

Therefore be it always ours to love and admire our Heavenly Father's Wisdom, and cry out with S. Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God!" His Love is a fathomless depth by which He has prepared us unlimited means whereby we may be saved, and His Wisdom is boundless in

adapting these means to our wants. What can we fear, rather what may we not hope, being as we are the children of a Father so rich in love, so wise in foreknowledge, so Good, so farseeing in act towards us. Never must we suffer our minds to hover too curiously around His secret decrees, lest, moth-like, we singe our wings, and perish in that sacred fire. "His Judgments are unsearchable,"—or, as S. Gregory Nazianzen says, inscrutable; we cannot fathom them, or perceive how He works, and however good our intentions, we are continually at fault, and lose the track. "For who hath known the Mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?" Is it not rather He Who prevents us with all manner of blessings, in order to crown us with blessing and glory? Verily, all things are "of Him," their Creator, "through Him," their Ruler, "to Him," their Sustainer, "to Whom be glory for ever. Amen." Be it ours to journey on in holy love, assured that he who possesses it in death will rejoice therein for ever after death.

CHAPTER IX.

*There is a certain Form of Love which yet lingers
in the Soul which has lost Divine Charity.*

HE who lies hovering between life and death, gradually sinking, can hardly be called a living man, since we scarce know whether to call his state a living death or an expiring life. Truly, it is a piteous sight; but yet more piteous is the state of that ungrateful soul which, falling continually back, and forsaking God's Love by gradual degrees of coldness and faithlessness, at last falls into the dread darkness of eternal perdition. Now this failing, perishing love is called *imperfect* because, although it exists after a fashion, it is on the point of leaving the soul. Yet

^a Rom. xi. 33-36.

when sin has severed love from the soul, a certain semblance thereof sometimes lingers therein which may easily deceive us. It happens thus: Love, while in us, is wont to produce certain acts towards God by which the soul acquires an habitual tendency, which is not so much love itself, as a bent and inclination taken from constant action. Thus one who is accustomed to preach or celebrate will sometimes in dreaming say the same things he is wont to say preaching or celebrating, though all such are of course profitless, because they are mere reflections of a habit, not anything real in themselves. So charity, by force of habit, impresses us with a certain tendency to love which lingers even when the real thing is gone.

I remember when a student visiting an old well in a village near Paris in which lay an echo which repeated one's words many times, so that one unaccustomed to such matters might have supposed there to be a man at the bottom. But we knew very well that there was no one in the well, only there were certain hollows which caught the sound of the voice and reproduced it, this again being caught in another hollow, and so on up to eleven repetitions. Yet these were not really our voices, only a likeness thereof. And verily the difference was great; for when we spoke several words, the echo repeated but one or two, it cut short the sounds which we pronounced, it varied our intonation, and only began to repeat the word when we had ended. In short, it was not the voice of a living man, but merely of a hollow rock, which nevertheless was so like to that whence it was derived, as easily to deceive one who knew not the mystery.

Now follow my meaning. When holy charity has dwelt in a soul, it produces a second love, which is not itself, albeit coming of it, but a human love so very like to charity, that it will linger after that is dead within, and easily deceive the unknowing, as Zeuxis' grapes deceived the birds. Yet there is a wide differ-

ence, for the voice of Charity utters and effects all God's Commandments within the heart, but this human love which survives may utter them indeed, but it effects few or none. Charity articulates every syllable, *i.e.* all the details of God's Commandments; but human love leaves out more or less,—above all, a right and pure intention. And the tone of charity is ever sweet and soft; but human love is ever pitched too high or too low, and never begins its work save when Charity has ended hers. For so long as charity abides in the soul it uses this human love as its servant; but when charity is gone, and human love is left to itself, its acts are worthless. When Elisha committed his staff to Gehazi, it could perform no miracle in his absence,¹ and so the acts of human love apart from Divine Charity are of no avail for everlasting life; and that because human love by itself has no supernatural power whereby to lead the soul to do all things for God, a power which belongs only to Divine Love.

CHAPTER X.

The Danger of this Imperfect Love.

CONSIDER Judas after the Betrayal; how, repenting, he took the price of his sin back to the elders, and acknowledged the innocence of the Son of God.² This was the result of that imperfect love which previous charity had left in him. Men fall by degrees; it is seldom that any reaches the depth of evil suddenly.

The perfumer carries the scent of his wares with him beyond his shop, and those who have been near Heaven's bliss retain the aroma awhile. Early in the morning the stag's scent lies strong; towards evening it fails, and as it lessens so the hounds fail in

¹ 2 Kings iv.

² Matt. xxvii. 3, 4.

their track. When charity has dwelt within a soul, its aroma is perceptible for some time after itself is gone; but gradually that dies away, and there is no more sign that charity was ever there.

I have seen men brought up from their youth in God's ways, who, falling back, showed many traces of better things for a time, so that it was hard to say what they really were; but after a while it was plain that these traces pertained to a thing that was past, and were merely tokens of what had been. Now all such imperfect love is good in itself as the handmaid of charity, serving it while present within the soul, ready to serve should it return. It cannot perform the works of perfect love, but need not be despised therefore; the stars are beautiful in themselves, although dimmed by the sun's light when it shines. Nevertheless this imperfect love is a danger, because we are prone to rest satisfied with it, to take the shadow for the reality, and to imagine ourselves saints, while those sins which drive out real charity are gaining such strength within us as at last to win the day.

If Jacob had never lost sight of Rachel on his wedding day, he would not have been deceived by Laban into accepting Leah instead of her. So it is that self-love deceives us. Directly that we lose sight of charity, self-love thrusts forward this other love which is mere habit, and we are satisfied with it, and take it for real charity until some strong light shows us how we have been deluded.

Sad indeed it is to see a soul flattering itself with an unreal holiness, and at rest as though possessing charity, and then suddenly discover that its holiness is unreal, its rest a mere torpor, its happiness mere delusion!

CHAPTER XI.

How to distinguish this Imperfect Love.

BUT how, you will say, are you to distinguish between Rachel and Leah, between charity and this imperfect love which kindles you? If on examining what are the objects of your desires, affections, and aims you find any for which you would contravene God's Will and Pleasure by mortal sin, you may be absolutely certain that whatever good feelings or energy in His service you may seem to have, it comes solely of this imperfect love; for if perfect love ruled your heart, it would utterly reject every thought, affection, or desire which could have so baneful a tendency. Remember, however, that such examination must be of your actual affections. There is no need to imagine what may come hereafter; enough if we be faithful in present events as they occur. Each season has its own burden and strife.

If, nevertheless, you want to test your spiritual strength by foreseeing trials and struggles, it is all very well so long as you do not imagine yourself really the better for your imaginary valour. Recollect the children of Ephraim, who, in spite of what they had done in times of peace, "turned themselves back in the day of battle."¹ So when you boldly foresee future possible trials, if you feel brave and steadfast, thank God, for it is a good feeling; but abide humbly between confidence and mistrust, hoping that with His Help you will be able to do all you think, but fearing lest in your wonted weakness you should fail in courage, and do nothing. Or should mistrust grow so strong that you feel you would be powerless, and are tempted to despair by such imaginary trials, then quiet yourself with a steadfast resolution to be faithful

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 10.

in whatever comes first, and hope that should the trial you foresee with so much fear ever occur, God would increase His Grace so as to enable you to meet it, and that while He does not give you strength for an imaginary or unnecessary conflict, He will not fail you in the time of need. For if some have lost heart when the moment of trial came, others have lost their fear and found a courage and resolution in the presence of danger which they had never felt before it came. And some of God's servants have frightened themselves unreasonably at the prospect of trials before which they have not quailed when actually present. When such fears arise, enough if we hope to be strengthened in time of need. Not even Samson was from the first in full possession of all his after courage; for we read that when the lion of Timnath "roared against him, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and gave him strength to rend it as he would have rent a kid," and again when he destroyed a thousand men at Lehi.¹ Whereby it is plain that we need not necessarily be always in possession of the strength and courage wanted to overcome the "roaring lion, who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."² Such possession might tend to foster conceit and presumption. Enough that we always stedfastly desire to fight a good fight, and heartily trust in God's Gracious Help, promised to us in time of need.

¹ Judg. xiv. xv.

² 1 Peter v. 8.

BOOK V.

THE TWO CHIEF ACTS OF DIVINE LOVE, WHICH ARE COMPLACENCY AND BENEVOLENCE.

CHAPTER I.

Wherein the Complacency of Holy Love consists.

LOVE, as we have said already, is neither more nor less than the tending and outpouring of the heart towards that which is good by means of the pleasure or complacency it finds therein; so that pleasure is the great motive of love, as love is of pleasure.

This tending is exercised towards God after the following manner. By faith we know the Godhead to be an Incomprehensible Gulf of all Perfection, Supremely Infinite in Excellence, and Infinitely Supreme in Goodness. This truth, as taught by faith, we dwell upon in meditation, whether it be the collective perfection or the individual, *e.g.* the Omnipotence, Wisdom, Eternity, etc., of God. Now when the understanding is thoroughly impressed with the grandeur of His Goodness, our will cannot but be moved to delight in such Goodness; and then we use our free-will and self-control, stimulating our heart to renew its first outburst of complacency by means of acts of joyful acknowledgment: "He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!"¹ Blessed be God in His Goodness, and thrice blessed I, in life and death, knowing how vast are His Riches and Goodness!

¹ Cant. v. 16.

Thus acknowledging and rejoicing in the Goodness we behold in God, we produce that act of love which is technically called "complacency," for the soul takes infinitely greater delight in the Divine Pleasure than in its own. And this love it is which so filled the saints, causing them to dwell with such delight on the Perfection of their Beloved, and to rejoice in His Name: "Be ye sure that the Lord He is God;"¹ "O God, Thou art my God . . . The Lord Himself is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup;"² "It is good for me to hold me fast by God . . . God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."³ It is by this complacency that He is our God, because thereby our heart embraces and possesses Him. He is our heritage, because thereby we enjoy His gifts, and derive all manner of delight from them. By this complacency we spiritually eat and drink the Perfections of the Godhead, for we draw them into our own heart, and they become ours.

Jacob's flock reproduced in their young the colours they beheld in the fountain whence they drank,⁴ and in like wise the soul which dwells in loving contemplation on God reproduces in itself the colours, *i.e.* the marvels of perfection, which it beholds, and, beholding, appropriates. Ah! how rapturous will be that joy when among the blessed it is given us to behold the Beloved of our hearts as a boundless Sea of delight, Whose waters are all Perfection and Goodness! Verily then, like the hart weary with the chase, we shall plunge into the living waters, and fill our souls with that fulness of bliss, and the Bridegroom will come unto us, and make His abode with us.⁵ This is the loving theft of love, which, without causing the Beloved to pale, steals His colours; without despoiling Him, clothes itself with His robe; takes all He has without depriving Him of anything; even as the atmosphere absorbs light without diminishing that of

¹ Ps. c. 2.² Ps. xvi. 2, 6.³ Ps. lxxiii. 25, 27.⁴ Gen. xxx.⁵ John xiv. 23.

the sun, or the mirror reflects human beauty without depriving him who looks therein of aught.

"Their abominations were according as they loved," says the Prophet Hosea of evil men;¹ and in like manner we may say of the good, that they are "according" to that they love. It is recorded of S. Clara de Montefalco that her delight in meditation upon the Passion and the Trinity was so great, that the symbols thereof were stamped upon her heart, which became like to that she loved. And S. Paul so greatly loved the Lord's Life, Passion, and Death, that they filled his heart; his will through dilection, his memory through meditation, his understanding through contemplation. But how did the Dear Lord fill the Apostle's heart? Through the channel of complacent love; for he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."² Bear in mind that the only difference between glorying in any one and taking pleasure in Him, is that he who glories adds honour to pleasure, inasmuch as honour cannot be without pleasure, although pleasure may exist without honour. So that S. Paul had such delight in, and felt so highly honoured in that Divine Goodness which was set forth in the Life and Death of Jesus, that he found no pleasure in aught else. And therefore he gloried only in the Cross, saying, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."³

¹ Hos. ix. 10.

² Gal. vi. 14.

³ Gal. ii. 20.

CHAPTER II.

This Holy Complacency renders us the Babes of Christ.

THREE blessed is that soul whose chief delight is in realising God and His Infinite Goodness ; for it is through this door that the Beloved "will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."¹ We feed upon His sweetness, and are satisfied therewith, through the boundless delight we feel. And it is called a *supper*, because of the rest which follows, since complacent love causes us to rest under its shadow, and gently feed therein. You know that the heart feeds on that wherein it takes delight, as we say, *e.g.*, that this man feeds on honour, another on riches ; and the Wise Man says, "The mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness,"² while the Word Himself said, "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me."³ Physicians and philosophers agree in saying that what pleases the appetite feeds a man.

"Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."⁴ And the Beloved does come into His garden when He comes into the loving soul ; for since His "delights are with the sons of men,"⁵ where can He better dwell than where He has set His Own Image and Likeness ? It is a garden wherein He Himself has planted the delight we feel in His Goodness, whereon we feed, just as His Goodness feeds on our delight ; and this reciprocal pleasure excites that incomparable love of complacence whereby the soul becomes the garden of her Beloved, and renders to Him its "pleasant fruits." It draws God's Heart to its own, and He sheds His precious balms therein, thus fulfilling the words, "The King hath brought me

¹ Rev. iii. 20.² Prov. xv. 14.³ John iv. 34.⁴ Cant. iv. 16.⁵ Prov. viii. 31.

into His chambers : we will be glad and rejoice in Thee, we will remember Thy Love more than wine : the upright love Thee."¹ What are the "chambers" of the King of Love but His Breast, which is full of sweetness to His own, as the mother's breast is full of milk for her babe. Thus the soul gazes on the countless treasures of its Beloved, and feels satisfied and abounds, for all is its own through love. And even as the babe thrills with eagerness at the prospect of satisfying its hunger, so the soul thrills with delight as it contemplates the brightness of that exceeding love. Verily, "the upright love Thee."

Nature has placed the maternal breast close to the heart so that by its warmth milk may be produced. And thus the babe's first nourishment should come of love : "Thy Love is better than wine."² Observe that the comparison between milk and wine is so grateful to the Bride that she repeats it over and over again. Wine is the milk of the grape, milk the wine of the breast. The Bride not only likens her Beloved to grapes, but to grapes of Cyprus³—that is, highly perfumed. Moses says the Lord gave the Israelites "the pure blood of the grape ;"⁴ and when Jacob prophesied Judah's fertile portion in the Promised Land, he foretold the highest blessing of Christians, saying that the Saviour would "wash His garments"—*i.e.* His Church—"in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes."⁵ Wine and milk are not more different than the juice of the grape (called *must*) and wine ; for as the must gradually takes colour by reason of the sun's heat, and turns into wine, so the heart's blood changes its colour through heat and becomes food for the babe.

Milk, which is the heart's food, composed solely of love, represents mystical knowledge and theology, *i.e.* the sweetness coming of a loving complacence in meditation on things Divine ; while wine signifies

¹ Cant. i. 4.

² Cant. i. 2.

³ See Vulgate.

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 14.

⁵ Gen. xlix. 11.

ordinary worldly knowledge, which is acquired by dint of exertion under the wine-press of argument and research. And surely the milk we draw from our Saviour's Love is incomparably better than the wine of human knowledge ; prepared as it is for His children without any forethought of theirs, it is "sweet as ointment poured forth," it gladdens without intoxicating, it uplifts without taking a man out of himself.

When Isaac kissed his favourite son, "he smelled the smell of his raiment," and finding it exceedingly grateful, cried out, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed." The raiment and the perfume were Jacob's, but Isaac had the enjoyment and the complacency therein. And so the soul which clings to its Saviour in love is filled with the sweetness of His perfumes, and cries out, "The smell of Thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. . . . How much better is Thy Love than wine, and the smell of Thine ointments than all spices !"²

CHAPTER III.

*The Love of Complacency turns our Hearts to God,
and gives a perpetual Longing after Him.*

OUR love to God springs from that first delight which the soul experiences so soon as it perceives His Goodness when first reaching after Him. And when this first delight is confirmed and strength-

¹ Gen. xxvii. 27.

² Cant. iv. 10, 11. The concluding paragraph of this chapter is a quotation from S. Augustine rendered in verse, probably S. Francis' own translation :—

" Entre l'un et l'autre mystère,
Auquel dois-je mon cœur ranger ?
D'un costé' le sein de la mère
M'offre son lait pour en manger ;
De l'autre la playe salutaire
Jette son sang pour m'abbreuver."

ened by means of exercising this love, as before said, then we attract the Divine Perfection to our own heart by our enjoyment thereof, according to the words, "My Beloved is mine."¹ But inasmuch as this loving delight, though in us, comes of God, it reciprocally gives us to Him, and we become His, even as He is ours.

The herb *Aproxis* has so close an affinity with fire, that even while at a distance it attracts the flame and kindles, not so much from the heat, as from the brightness thereof. Surely if it could speak it would say, "My beloved fire is mine, since I have attracted it, and rejoice in its flames ; but I too belong to it, for if I attracted it, it has absorbed me, being the strongest and best. It is my fire, I its fuel ; I attract it, it burns me." So the heart which has drawn God's Perfection into it may say, "God's Goodness is mine, since I taste thereof, and I am His, since He possesses and fills me wholly." Through this complacency our soul, like Gideon's fleece,² is filled with the dew of Heaven. The dew belongs to the fleece, for it fell thereon ; but the fleece belongs to the dew, for it is steeped therewith. Which belongs most to the other, the shell or the pearl ? The pearl belongs to the shell, where it was attracted ; but the shell belongs to the pearl, whence it derives all its value. The love of complacency makes us possessors of God, by reason of His Perfections, which it attracts, and causes God to possess us, knitting us to those His Perfections. And in this complacency we drink so deeply of satisfaction that we long for more, and tasting Heavenly sweetness, we fain would taste again, eating, we would yet be filled.

S. Peter says that the Prophets searched and inquired diligently, and prophesied of the grace that should come unto us Christians, both by His Sufferings and the Glory that should follow, "which things the angels desire to look into."³ How can the angels, who see

¹ Cant. ii. 16.

² Gen. vi.

³ 1 Peter i. 11, 12.

the Redeemer and behold all His Mysteries, yet desire to look into this? Verily, they behold Him, and beholding is so sweet, that their very delight therein satisfies them and yet kindles desire, their enjoyment not being hindered by desire, but rather perfected, even as their desire is not extinguished but sharpened by enjoyment.

There is a herb called *Sciticus*, of which it is said that those who chew it suffer neither from hunger nor thirst, it is so satisfying, and yet their appetite never fails, it is so delicious. And in like wise when the will finds God it rests in Him with perfect delight, while yet it continues to long after Him ; desiring to love, it loves to desire. Rest of heart does not consist in total immovability, but in wanting nothing ; it is not to be motionless, but to have no need to move.

The souls of the lost are in perpetual motion without any rest ; we in our pilgrim state are one while at rest, another in motion. But the blessed always enjoy rest in motion and motion in rest, while God only enjoys motionless rest, inasmuch as He is in Himself an All-pure Act. And although the ordinary laws of our mortal life do not give us rest amid our movements, yet whensoever we attempt to carry out the conditions of immortal life by means of holy love, we find rest to the movement of our affections, and movement in our rest in our Beloved, as a foretaste of that blessedness at which we aim.

If it be true that the chameleon lives on air, it cannot fail to find food everywhere ; and when it moves from place to place, it is not in search of food, but rather as sporting amid its pastures, as fish sport in the sea. So he who while possessing God yet longs for Him, longs not as needing to seek Him, but as exercising those very affections which he already enjoys ; for the heart entertains such desire, not as seeking what it already has, but as revelling therein ; even as, having walked to some delicious garden, we continue to walk when there, no longer in order to arrive, but the more

to enjoy its charms. "Seek the Lord and His strength: seek His Face evermore."¹ S. Augustine says that we are for ever seeking that which we love eternally: love persists in seeking that which it has found, not in order to have it, but to have it for ever. In a word, that soul which practises the love of complacency cries out continually amid its sacred silence, "Enough for me that God is God, His Goodness Infinite, His Perfection Boundless. Whether I live or die, what matter, since my Beloved lives and reigns eternally?" neither can death cast a shadow over him who knows that His Sovereign Love lives. Enough for the loving soul to know that its Beloved possesses all things, since its life is in Him more than in itself: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."²

CHAPTER IV.

The Loving Sympathy which attends the Love of Complacency.

COMPASSION, sympathy, pity, or mercy, call it which you will, is simply an affection which causes us to share the pain or suffering of him we love, drawing his misery into our own heart, as it were (whence the word *misericordia*), just as complacency draws the pleasure and satisfaction of the beloved object into our heart. And both are alike the result of love, by the virtue it has of uniting the heart to the thing loved, and thereby rendering the joys and sorrows of friends common. Now sympathy throws great light upon complacent love.

Sympathy is in degree according to the love whence it springs. Thus the sympathy of a mother for her child is intense, as we so often find mentioned in Holy Scripture. Consider the sympathy which filled Hagar's

¹ Ps. cv. 4.

² Gal. ii. 20.

heart for Ishmael's suffering when he lay athirst in the wilderness;¹ or that of David for Absalom;² or the parental soul of S. Paul, when he said, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?"³ when he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow,"⁴ when he was "dying daily,"⁵ for his children in the faith. And above all, consider the love which pierced the heart of the Mother of our Lord with all His pains and griefs, His Passion and Cross; how the nails which went through His Sacred Body, the thorns which pierced His Brow, were verily the "sword which shall pierce through thy own soul also," as foretold to her,⁶ sorrows of which she might indeed say that they were "a bundle of myrrh betwixt her breasts."⁷ And again, consider Jacob, who, on hearing of the death of Joseph, cried out, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning."⁸

Sympathy also depends in its degree on the suffering beheld in those we love, since, even where the love be small, exceeding suffering draws forth much pity. Thus Cæsar wept for Pompey; and the daughters of Jerusalem wept for our Lord,⁹ although the greater part among them had not cleaved to Him; and Job's friends lamented sore over him.¹⁰ Jacob's heart was rent at the thought of Joseph's cruel death; Hagar went aside, unable to see her child die; and the Lord wept over Lazarus and over Jerusalem. Even so complacent love is increased in proportion as a soul is dear to us, and we enter into its joy. When Jacob knew that his son lived, his "spirit revived."¹¹ What is meant by reviving? Truly our spirits actually die only when sin separates us from God, but they die sometimes, so to say, in another, as instanced in Jacob; for in his great sympathy love drew Joseph's death into Jacob's heart, and by a miracle of which

¹ Gen. xxi. 16.² 2 Sam. xviii. 33.³ 2 Cor. xi. 29.⁴ Rom. ix. 2.⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 31.⁶ Luke ii. 35.⁷ Cant. i. 13.⁸ Gen. xxxvii. 35.⁹ Luke xxiii. 27.¹⁰ Job ii. 12.¹¹ Gen. xlv. 27.

love alone is capable, the Patriarch was as one dead by reason of a son who was really alive. But when he knew that his son lived, his love overthrew this fictitious death and brought back real life, and so he "revived," saying, "It is enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive." And when with his own eyes he beheld his greatness, he fell on Joseph's neck and wept, and cried out, "Now let me die joyful, since I have seen thy face, and thou art yet alive."¹ See how Jacob pours forth his joy, which is so great that it makes even death itself joyful and welcome. Whether of those two was gladdest at Joseph's prosperity, he who enjoyed it, or Jacob who rejoiced in it? Surely, if the point of prosperity is the enjoyment it brings, the father had as much and more than the son ; for the son, all viceroy as he was, had a ruler's toils and cares, but the father enjoyed it through the love of complacency, and tasted nought save his son's greatness and prosperity, without any care or toil. "I shall die content." If death itself could not affect his joy, what else could do so? "Love is strong as death ;"² and the joy of love overpowers the sadness of death, for death cannot extinguish, but rather revives it. There is a fountain near Grenoble, to which S. Augustine bears witness that a fire burns within ; and this holy love is so strong, that its flame survives amid the utmost bitterness of death, and "many waters cannot quench love."³

¹ Gen. xlv. 30. In the English version "*lætus*" is left out, thereby depriving the passage of this beautiful interpretation.

² Cant. viii. 6.

³ Cant. viii. 7.

CHAPTER V.

*The Sympathy and Complacent Love found in
the Passion of our Lord.*

WHEN I behold my Saviour on the Mount of Olives, His Soul "sorrowful even unto death," I am forced to cry out, "What but love itself in its boundless compassion could so draw our misery into Thy All-powerful Heart?" And how can the devout mind contemplate the Sorrows of the Divine Lover of souls without a loving holy grief? And remembering that they were not the result of weakness, but rather of His Exceeding and Powerful Affection, surely such a soul will cry out with the Bride of the Canticles, "I am black" with sympathetic grief, "but comely" through love. The Sufferings of my Beloved are as though "the sun had looked upon me;"¹ for who could see one dearer than life in such anguish, and not be withered by the sorrow? The tents of the wandering tribes are thick with dust, and I, like them, am weighed down with distress as I gaze upon my Saviour's Woes. But forasmuch as those Woes are the result of love, while they grieve me through sympathy, they win me through affection. How could a faithful Bride fail to rejoice in beholding the Bridegroom's so great Love? And thus beneath the blackness of sorrow we find the comeliness of love; and while I mourn over the Passion and Death of my King, I rejoice over His Exceeding Love amid all this travail and heaviness. So there are at once the "black" tents of Kedar, and the bordered curtains of Solomon. Love makes the unlike like; my Beloved is a burning thorn-bush, and I am "as a lily among thorns."² I suffer in His Pangs, but I rejoice in His Love; and "if we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together."³

¹ Cant. i. 5, 6.² Cant. ii. 2.³ Rom. viii. 17.

This was the love through which the seraphic S. Francis received the stigmata, and S. Catherine of Sienna the precious wounds—love sharpening the edge of sympathy. Thus the loving delight we feel in our Dear Lord's Love quickens infinitely our compassion for His griefs, as, on the other hand, sympathy with those griefs enhances love's delight. And so the two, sympathetic love and loving sympathy, struggle, like another Esau and Jacob, in an extasy of love and pain such as S. Francis and S. Catherine more than others experienced; and thus is born that precious union of the heart with God which, as a mystical Benjamin, is the offspring both of suffering and love.¹

Words cannot tell how the Lord longs to enter into our souls through this sympathetic love. "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My undefiled," He cries; "for My Head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night."² What is this dew but the sorrows of His Passion? Pearls are but dewdrops shed by the night over the sea, and caught within the shell; and so the Beloved One charged with the dewdrops of love of that night of suffering and that darkened noonday sun, calls on thee to open thy heart, even as the shell expands to the dew, promising to shed the drops of His Passion within it, sure as they are to turn to gracious pearls of consolation.

CHAPTER VI.

The Love of Benevolence we practise towards our Lord through Desire.

GOD'S Love towards us always begins with Benevolence, for it is He Who creates all that good in us, wherein He afterwards takes delight. He raised up David after His Own Will, and then "found him a man after His Own Heart"³ through love.

¹ Gen. xxxv. 18.

² Cant. v. 2.

³ Acts xiii. 22.

He created first the universe for man, and then man for the universe, giving to each thing that measure of goodness which was fitting, in His Pure Benevolence, and then beholding the whole "that it was very good,"¹ He rested lovingly from His Work.

But on the other hand, our love to God begins with the complacence we find in His Sovereign Goodness and Infinite Perfection, and thence we go on to benevolence. And as God's complacence in His creatures is nothing else than the continuance of His Benevolence towards them, so our benevolence towards God is but the continuance and confirmation of our complacence in Him.

Now this love of benevolence towards God is as follows. It is impossible for us really to desire any increase of good to God, because His Goodness is infinitely more perfect than anything we can imagine or desire. Desire can only have respect to something future, and there is no future good with God, all being so essentially present with Him, that the presence of good in His Divine Majesty is neither more nor less than His Divinity itself. Since then we can have no actual desire on God's behalf, we cry out with David, "Lord, Thou art my God, my goods are nothing unto Thee."² What is there but is "nothing" unto Thee? yet were it possible that Thou couldst want aught, I would desire it for Thee at the cost of my life and being; were it possible to add any good thing to Thee, I would pour out my life in one long wish to give it Thee. But since this may not be, I rejoice above all things in that Thy Supreme Good to which nothing can be added. Yet were it possible to add aught thereto, then would I with my whole being desire so to do. And thus in the very thought of what is impossible I can through fervent love offer somewhat to Thy Glory. Some such thing S. Augustine was wont to do.

Again, another form of the love of benevolence to-

¹ Gen. i. 31.

² Ps. xv, 2.

wards God is when, although unable to add to His intrinsic Glory, we yet fervently desire to increase it ourselves, and to rejoice more and more in His Goodness. And this not because of our own satisfaction in so doing, but for His Sake alone; just as we do not seek to bestow sympathy for the sake of the sorrow with which it fills us, but because that sympathy unites us with the object of our love. And by means of such unitive love we become ever more and more like to the Mother of Love, whose soul magnified the Lord, and her spirit "rejoiced in God her Saviour," thereby to show that she so magnified Him through her exceeding delight in the Divine Goodness.

CHAPTER VII.

The Desire to exalt and magnify the Lord draws us from inferior Pleasures, and fixes our Mind on His Divine Passion.

THUS the love of benevolence leads us to desire an ever-increasing delight in God's Goodness, and with a view to this increase the soul sedulously weans itself from all other pleasures the more entirely to give itself to God. A religious once asked the devout Brother Giles, one of the first and holiest associates of S. Francis, how he could best please God, to which the Brother replied by chanting "One to One, one to One;" and when called to explain, he said, "Always give your soul, which is one, to God alone, Who is One." The soul is frittered away by pleasure, and a succession of worldly pleasures dissipates and hinders it from seriously heeding that which it is bound to take in God. A true lover scarce finds any delight save in the object of his love. Thus S. Paul "counted all things but dung" when compared with Christ.¹ And the Bride has no thought save for

¹ Phil. iii. 8.

her Beloved : "He is mine, and I am His."¹ The soul that loves thus would not willingly linger even among angels, save in so far as they could promote its love. "Saw ye Him Whom my soul loveth?"² When Magdalene met the angels at the sepulchre, and they would have comforted her, she had no words for them save "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him ;"³ and when, turning, she beheld, as she thought, the gardener, she was not satisfied ; flowers could not comfort her, she had thorns within her heart, she sought the Crucified : "Tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." And then, so soon as He called her by her name, her soul melted away for joy, and she could only cry out, "Master !" Not angels, not the Lord Himself, until she recognised the familiar form which had won her love, could satisfy her. The kings of the East did not pause to admire the beauty of Jerusalem, or to gaze upon their leading star ; they hurried on till they reached the Babe of Bethlehem. And the Mother of Fair Love and the Spouse of Holy Love could not linger amid kinsfolk and acquaintance, but went "in sorrow seeking" the only object of their love.⁴ The craving to increase holy pleasure turns from all else the more earnestly to exercise that to which God's Benevolence calls it.

And the better to magnify this Sovereign Lover, the soul is ever "seeking His Face,"⁵ studying its endless beauties, and the countless motives for an ever-increasing delight therein. Thus David perpetually rehearses the marvellous works of the Lord, and the Bride tells out the perfections of her Beloved one by one,⁶ stimulating her soul to the highest enjoyment of them, praising His Holy Name, and bringing all else into captivity to Him Who is above all things.

¹ Cant. ii. 16.

² Cant. iii. 3.

³ John xx. 13.

⁴ Luke ii.

⁵ Ps. xxvii. 9.

⁶ Cant. v.

CHAPTER VIII.

**How the Love of Holy Benevolence tends to the
Praise of the Dear Lord.**

HONOUR lies in him who offers it, not him who receives it. Do we not often honour those who are altogether unconscious of the fact? those who do not even know of our existence? And after the manner of human thought and parlance, we hold that we confer a benefit on one whom we honour, especially if we bestow the meed of praise upon him; and we speak of a man rich in honour, glory, reputation, and praise, although all these be wholly without their recipient, who may receive no advantage whatever from them, as S. Augustine is reputed to have said, "Alas, poor Aristotle! praised where thou art not, burnt where thou art." I would ask what benefit Cæsar or Alexander the Great derive from all the worthless praise which has been lavished on them? God, Whose Goodness surpasses all praise and honour, can receive no addition or advantage from the homage we render Him; He is not richer, greater, or more blessed in consequence, for all these depend solely upon the Divine Infiniteness of His Goodness. Yet inasmuch as, according to our ordinary apprehension, honour is looked upon as a token of the goodwill we bear to others, and so far from implying any lack on their part by it, we rather express our belief in their abundant excellence thereby; so we exercise this manner of benevolence towards God, Who not merely accepts it at our hands, but so entirely demands it as suitable to our relative position, and a testimony of the veneration we bear Him, that He has even commanded us to offer Him honour and glory.

So, then, the soul which delights in God's Boundless Perfection, while conscious that it can in nowise add

to or desire the increase of His Goodness, which is greater than anything we can conceive, yet asks that His Holy Name may be blessed, exalted, praised, and adored ever more and more. Therefore as a bee it hovers from the flower of one good work to another, gathering up all manner of holy affections, and producing thereout the Divine honey of blessing and praise wherewith to magnify the Name of the Beloved, emulating the royal Psalmist, who offered his mystic outpourings of praise and thanksgiving upon the altar of his heart.¹

And this thirst for the praise of God is insatiable, because the soul which experiences it craves for infinite outpouring, realising as it does that His Perfection is more than infinite; and feeling incapable of satisfying that craving, it bursts forth in all manner of fervent efforts, which wax yet warmer through the love of complacency, since the more the soul tastes of the sweetness of God's Beauty, the more it longs worthily to praise and glorify Him. And with worthier praise the soul's love grows stronger; and so, in mutual reaction, love and praise ever wax more and more powerful to the end. Even so it is, Pliny tells us, with the nightingales, who during some fortnight cease not to warble, striving each to surpass the other; and when their song is sweetest, they are yet keener to excel, making such intense efforts thereto, that sometimes they die of the very excess,—worthy, forsooth, of the name Philomel, dying thus of love and of song.

Ah yes! and truly the heart which pants to praise God knows a mightily sweet anguish and a piercingly sharp sweetness when at best it falls so short!

¹ " Mon cœur volant çà et là
Des aisles de sa pensée,
Ravy d'admiration,
D'une voix haut eslançée,
Un sacrifice immola,
Sur la harpe bien sonnée
Chantant bénédiction
Au Seigneur Dieu de Sion."

Nightingale-like, it would fain ever raise its voice in sweeter melody to laud its Beloved One ; the louder its praise, the greater its delight therein. It knows no grief save its own shortcomings ; and at last its very efforts exhaust it, as we find S. Francis bursting into tears, and falling down in the passionate outpouring of his love of God, like a nightingale that bursts its heart in the attempt to sing a louder, ever louder song of praise !

That most loving of all saints used to liken his religious to *cicale*¹ because they were wont to praise God through the night. The *cicala's* breast is full of pipes, like a natural organ, and that they may sing the better, they live only upon dew, imbibing even that not by their mouth, but by a kind of trunk issuing from their body, whence proceeds their loud, sonorous chirp. And in the loving soul, in like manner, every faculty is but as a pipe wherewith to chant the praise of the Beloved ; and its devotion is as the tongue of its heart, S. Bernard says, by which it gathers up the dew of heavenly perfection, and with the same it pours forth all manner of praise and blessing, even as the sweetest of all songsters exclaims, "Praise the Lord, O my soul ; and all that is within me praise His Holy Name!"² "I will alway give thanks unto the Lord ; His praise shall ever be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad!"³

¹ The southern *cicalo* is different to our grasshopper in this among other respects, that, as all who have sojourned in S. Francis' dear Italy know well, its chirrup is heard all through the hot summer's night.

Ps. ciii. 1.

³ Ps. xxxiv. 12.

CHAPTER IX.

**The Love of Benevolence makes us call upon all
Creation to join in praising God.**

THE heart which swells with longing to praise God beyond its own power goes forth to summon all nature to join : "O praise the Lord with me!" even as the Three Children in the fiery furnace, and David, who in his eagerness calls upon all things in Heaven and earth, in reckless confusion, to swell his song of praise—angels and dragons, fire and hail, snow and vapours, wind and storm, mountains and hills, trees and cattle, worms and feathered fowl.¹ And he winds up his many Psalms of praise with the final burst, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!"² And thus S. Francis invoked the sun and all creation to join the praise he could never sufficiently express for his soul's sweet Saviour. And the Bride, fainting amid the fervour of her praise, exclaims : "He brought me to His banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love;" I am so steeped in the delights of His Beauty, that "I am sick of love," wounded with the shaft of desire to praise Him more and more. "I charge you, stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples!"³

The love of complacency attracts their sweetnesss into the soul until it wellnigh reels; but the love of benevolence calls forth from out the soul such an out-pouring of praise, that it is constrained to call upon

¹ Ps. cxlviii.

² "Sus donc d'une bouche animée,
Célébrons tous la renommée
De l'Eternel, à qui mieux mieux ;
Nostre voix ensemble meslée,
Bien haut sur la voûte estoilée
Eslève son nom glorieux."

³ Cant. ii.

all creation to contribute the flowers of blessing, the fruits of thanksgiving and adoration, so that from all sides the sweet savour of worship may rise up to Him Who is above all honour and praise, Whom we can never worthily exalt.

It is this Divine passion of love which has led the Xaviers, the Antonys, the crowds of priests and religious who have gone forth into heathen lands, to India, to Japan, in order that the Holy Name of Jesus might be worshipped there. It is this Divine passion which has built so many noble churches, founded so many good works, written so many devout books, and caused so many holy servants of God to labour through life and till death amid the consuming flames of their exceeding zeal and devotion.

CHAPTER X.

The Desire to praise God makes us long after Heaven.

WHEN the loving soul realises that it can never satisfy its craving after the praise of God amid this world's infirmities, but that only in Heaven can that praise be perfected, it cries out in emulation of the blessed who stand before the Throne, and join in one never-ending, multiform concentrated, Alleluia!—a voice, loud as of a great thunder and of many waters, yet soft as of harpers harping with their harps,¹ crying out, Amen, Alleluia! A voice coming "out of the Throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great!" to which the voice of a great multitude answers, "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"² And what is that lovely voice proceeding from the Throne, speaking Alleluias to the elect, save that most holy complacence, which, entering into the blessed, fills them with the

¹ Rev. xiv. 2.

² Rev. xix.

sweetness of Divine Perfection, whence springs loving benevolence, the living fount of praise? Thus complacence teaches God's wonders to those blessed ones, and benevolence moves them to pour out the incense of praise before the Throne. And therefore they sing eternal Alleluia! which is, Praise the Lord! Complacence comes from the Throne into the heart, and benevolence goes from the heart to the Throne.

Blessed indeed is that Temple where all is praise! Blessed they who live for ever amid that nightingale song of heavenly sweetness and praise!

So it is that the heart which can neither hear nor sing God's praises as it fain would do here below, is irresistibly drawn from this life's bondage to that other life where praise is perfected; and this longing sometimes grows so urgent in him who loves, that, overruling all other passions, it makes whatever is of this life wearisome, until the soul "faints and fails" for very love. And there have been cases where God has even permitted His saints to die from the very excess of love. Thus the seraphic S. Francis, after long years of intense desire to praise God worthily, having been assured by special revelation of his eternal salvation, could not contain his joy, but was day by day consumed by it, as though his life and soul were melted like incense in the flame of his ardent longing to see and praise his God. And at the last his soul was parted from the body as it were by an outburst of yearning towards Heaven, for he died crying out the inspired words, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto Thy Name; which thing if Thou wilt grant me, then shall the righteous resort unto my company." Like a nightingale, shut up in the cage of his body, wherein he could not worthily sing the praises of his Eternal Love, longing to sing his perfected song in the blessed company of like minstrels, amid the fair beauty of the Land that is very far off; crying out, "O Lord of my life, of Thy

¹ Ps. cxlii. 9.

Grace set me free from this earthly prison, that I may take flight there where those I love await me to join in their chorus of gladness! There joining my song to theirs, I will for ever sing Thy most sweet praise!" Like the peroration of a great orator, the Saint summed up all his desires and longings in this last utterance; and so fervently did he breathe it, that while doing so he passed away. How blessed a death to die, dying of love!

CHAPTER XI.

We share in the Praises rendered to God by our Redeemer and His Mother.

THUS we go on from step to step in this holy act of worship, from the inanimate to the animate things of creation, from the Church militant to the Church triumphant, wherein from saints and angels we go on to the Blessed Virgin, who praises and magnifies the Lord more sweetly and perfectly than all besides.

Two years ago I was at Milan with some other clergy, attracted there by memories of the great Archbishop S. Charles Borromeo, and we heard beautiful music in many churches. But there was one monastery where we heard a nun's voice so incomparably sweet, that it enchanted us more than all the rest put together, which seemed, however good, fit merely as a background to that exquisite music. Even so amid all human and angelic choirs we hear

"Our Lady sing Magnificat"¹

with a fuller note of praise than any other of God's

¹ See "Jerusalem, my happy Home," a hymn written by one John Thewlis, a priest executed in the persecutions of 1617. It will be found in the British Museum in a thin quarto, lettered "Queen Elisabeth," whence it has found its way to many hymn-books.

creatures. "Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."¹

But even the praises of the "Mother of Fair Love"² and of all the rest of creation, however lovely and excellent, fall so infinitely short of what God's Goodness deserves as to be utterly disproportionate thereto; so that although they are an expression of the urgent love of benevolence which the soul feels for its Beloved, they cannot satisfy it. Therefore it must needs go yet a step further, and call upon the Saviour to praise and glorify the Eternal Father with all the blessings of His Divine Sonship. And here indeed the mind is hushed in adoring stillness, and can no further go. The Son adoring the Father! He Who is "fairer than the children of men; Whose Lips are full of grace, because God has blessed Him for ever."³ All praise is perfume, but He is "as ointment poured forth."⁴ The Eternal Father accepts the praise of all others as sweetness, but of His Son He says with Jacob, "See, the smell of My Son is as the smell of a field which I have blessed."⁵ Yea, verily; all the praises which the Church militant or triumphant offer are but human or angelic—offered to the Creator, they yet come of the creature; but the praises of the Son are Divine, inasmuch as He is Very God—Divine in their source, Divine in their end, infinite, all perfect.

Were one who had listened to the chorus of songsters amid the woods, however sweet, suddenly to hear the full, rich melody of the nightingale, surely he would not hesitate to prefer that one song to all the rest combined; and so, from the various praises offered up by all creation to their God, we turn to the praise of the Son of God as far beyond all that heart of man could conceive, and are overwhelmed by the sweetness of its melody. "The Voice of my Beloved!" compared with which all other voices are as nought; "He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon

¹ Cant. ii. 14.

² Eccus. xxiv. 18.

³ Ps. xlv. 3.

⁴ Cant. i. 3.

⁵ Gen. xxvii. 27.

the hills. He is like a roe or a young hart : He standeth behind our wall," that is, our humanity ; " He looketh forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice," *i.e.* the wounds of His Hands and Feet and pierced Side.² Yea, verily, Divine Love, sitting in the Saviour's Heart as on a royal throne, looks through His wounded Side upon the hearts of the children of men, for He is the King of hearts, and beholds all hearts. But even as they who look through a lattice see while they themselves are scarce perceived, so the Divine Love of this Heart, or rather the Heart of this Divine Love, beholds ours plainly, while we but faintly perceive Him. And truly, did we see Him as He is, we should die of love for Him, even as He in His mortal life died for us, and would die yet, for very love, were He not Immortal.

Hearken to that Divine Heart singing its ineffable song of praise ! What would not we do even to hear it ? And He urges us in His Love : " Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away !"³ Come to that land where all is joy and blessing and praise. " The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. . . . Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away." And that thou mayest behold Me the better, look at Me through " the clefts of the rock," the pierced Side, " the secret places of the stairs," where the framework of My Body was rudely rent asunder on the Cross. " Let Me see thy countenance,"—now I see it without thy aid, then I shall see it of thine own will ; " let Me hear thy voice," let it blend with Mine, and so thy " voice shall be sweet and thy countenance comely." Never, surely, was such sweetness to the heart of man as when our voices, united and blended with that of the Saviour, shall take part in the boundless harmony of praise offered by the Beloved Son to the Eternal Father.

² Cant. ii. 8, 9.

³ Cant. ii. 10.

CHAPTER XII.

God's Sovereign Praise of Himself, in which we share through the Love of Benevolence.

ALL the earthly acts of our Saviour are infinite in merit and worth, inasmuch as He Who performed them is One God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But yet all are not of infinite nature or essence. Just as when in a room we do not receive light according to the vastness of the sun's brightness, but according to the size of the window through which that light penetrates; so the human actions of the Saviour are not infinite though of infinite worth, because though performed by a Divine Person, He did them not in the Infinite Greatness of His Divinity, but in the finite greatness of His Humanity. So that while the earthly actions of our Dear Lord are infinite as compared with ours, they are finite as compared with the Essential Infinitude of the Divinity. They possess infinite value, worth, and dignity in that they proceed from One Who is God; but they are of finite essence and nature, because God does them in His finite and Human Nature and Substance. Thus the praise offered by our Saviour as Man is not absolutely infinite, and cannot wholly correspond to the Infinite Greatness of the Divinity to Whom it is offered.

And therefore, after our first burst of admiration for such glorious praise as that rendered by the Son to the Father, we cannot fail to perceive that the Godhead is worthy of a yet higher praise than can be offered by all creation, or even by the Humanity of the Eternal Son.

If one should praise the sun because of its brightness, the higher he rose towards it, the more praiseworthy it would seem as he grew more conscious of its splendour. If, as we suppose, it is the beauty of that

light which moves the lark to sing, no wonder that the higher she rises the more powerful her song, until at last, fairly spent with song, she lowers both voice and flight. And so in proportion as we mount up towards God by the love of benevolence to hear and sing His praise, so do we realise how beyond all praise He is, until at length we discover that none save Himself Alone can worthily praise Him. Then indeed we cry out, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!" And that it may be clear that thereby we do not offer the glory of mere earthly praise to God, but that eternal and essential glory which He possesses in, by, and of Himself, we add, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen;" as though we said, "May God be ever glorified with that glory which He had before all creation in His Infinite Eternity and Eternal Infinity." And therefore it is that we add this Doxology to all our Psalms and Canticles, according to the ancient usage of the Eastern Church, a usage which S. Jerome besought the Pope Damasus to establish in the West, in testimony that all human and angelic praise is too poor worthily to sing God's Goodness, which can only be thus worthily sung by means of His Own Glory and praise.

Great the joy and delight of the loving soul to find its cravings satisfied and its beloved setting forth His Own praise! But even thence springs a fresh need to praise and thank God for thus glorifying Himself, so that the circle of perpetual love and praise and glory is never-ending. And whereas the loving soul began with a craving worthily to magnify the Lord, it ends by rejoicing in that boundless merit which can receive no worthy praise save in itself. And having attained this point, the rapt soul can only adore in silence, like the Seraphim of the Prophet,¹ who veiled their faces and their feet in acknowledgment that they could neither contemplate nor serve God worthily,

¹ Isa. vi. 2.

their feet being symbolical of service. Nevertheless they had wings wherewith to fly by the continual movement of complacency and benevolence, and their love finds rest in this sweet unrest.

Man's heart is never so uneasy as when its continual enlargement and contraction is hindered, never so easy as when its action is free ; so that one may say truly that its rest is in movement. And even so with the love of Seraphim and seraphic men, which finds rest in the continual movements of complacent love whereby it draws God into itself, and those of benevolence whereby it goes forth wholly to God. This love fain would behold the marvellous Goodness of God, but it folds the wings of that desire over its face, in confession that it cannot succeed. Fain, too, would it offer Him some worthy service, but again it covers the longing with wings, confessing itself powerless. And then nought remains to it save the two wings of complacency and benevolence, wherewith it takes flight, and finds its rest with God.

BOOK VI.

THE PRACTICE OF HOLY LOVE IN PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

CHAPTER I.

**Mystical Theology is nothing else save Meditation
and Prayer.**

THERE are two chief developments of our love towards God, one affective, the other effective, or, as S. Bernard says, active. By the first we give our affections to God and to that which He loves; by the second we serve Him, and obey His commands. The one unites us to His Goodness, the other causes us to fulfil His Will. The one inspires the love of complacency and benevolence, longings, and aspirations which tend to the union of our soul with God; the other fills us with the steadfast resolution, firm courage, and hearty obedience which are requisite to carry out God's Will, to suffer and accept willingly whatever it may be His Good Pleasure to send us. The one makes us find pleasure in God, the other makes us please Him; by one we conceive, by the other we produce. By the one we "set God as a seal upon our heart," as the standard round which all our affections rally; by the other "as a seal upon our arm," as the sword wherewith we can do mighty deeds.

Now the first of these exercises consists mainly in meditation, wherein so many interior actions take place that it is impossible to express them all, not only from their number, but from their nature and

quality, which being spiritual, cannot but be very subtle, and all but imperceptible to our understanding. The best trained hounds are apt to lose scent when the deer doubles and evades them by every device; and so we often lose insight of our hearts by its multiplicity of windings and doublings. God Alone in His Infinite Wisdom fathoms the depths and windings of our heart; He "understandeth my thoughts long before. He is about my path . . . and spieth out all my ways . . . His Knowledge is too excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it."¹ Were we to persist in trying to follow the course of our own minds and acts, we should involve ourselves in labyrinths without clue, and it would be an intolerable strain to think of our thoughts, consider our considerations, scan our spiritual vision, discern our perceptions, recall our recollections—a hopeless, useless entanglement! The handling of such matters is difficult, especially to one who is not greatly given to prayer.

We do not here use the word prayer (*oraison*) solely as the petition for some good thing, poured out before God by the faithful, as S. Basil defines it, but rather according to S. Bonaventura, who says that prayer (or meditation), generally speaking, includes all the contemplative acts; or S. Gregory Nyssen, who taught that prayer is intercourse of the soul with God; or S. Chrysostom, who calls it a parley with the Majesty of God; or, lastly, S. Augustine and S. Damascene, who say that prayer is an uplifting of the mind to God. And if prayer be an intercourse by which we hold converse with God, we aspire to Him and breathe in Him, while He inspires and breathes upon us.

But of what do we treat in prayer? what is the subject of that intercourse? Of what but God; for who can excite and foster love save through the Beloved? And therefore prayer and mystical theology are one and the same thing. We call it theology because, just as speculative theology concerns God

¹ Ps. cxxxix.

only, so this speaks but of Him, though with three points of difference,—*i.e.* I. That treats of God in that He is God, this in that He is to be loved above all things; in other words, one has reference to the Divinity of Supreme Goodness, the other to the Supreme Goodness of the Divinity. II. Speculative theology deals with God as referring to men; mystical theology speaks of God as of and in Himself. III. Speculative theology tends to the knowledge, mystical theology to the love, of God; so that while the one makes profound scholars and learned theologians, the other makes devout lovers of God.

It is called mystic because it is secret, and the intercourse between God and the soul which it fosters is appreciable only to those who practise it. The language of lovers is one unintelligible to all but themselves: "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the Voice of my Beloved that knocketh."¹ Who would have supposed that the Bride while sleeping could commune with her Bridegroom? But where love is spoken words are needless, as well as all other external means of communication. Briefly, prayer and mystic theology are nothing else than a conversation by which the soul carries on a loving intercourse with God, through which to attain full union with Him. Prayer is a "manna" by reason of the countless sweetnesses it imparts to those who use it; but it is "hidden"² because it falls before the dawn of any earthly knowledge, in the mental wilderness where the soul comes Face to face with God."³ "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?"⁴ And so likewise the longing for secrecy led the Bride to plead, "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the villages;"⁵ and for the same reason she is called a turtledove, loving solitary, shaded places, where she

¹ Cant. v. 2.² Rev. ii. 17.³ Exod. xvi. 13, 14.⁴ Cant. iii. 6.⁵ Cant. vii. 11.

coos her plaintive notes for her mate alone, soliciting him while living, mourning him when dead. So in the Canticles the Heavenly Bride and Bridegroom show forth their love in continual intercourse; and if others break in, it is without hindering their converse. S. Teresa used to say that she specially loved to meditate on those Mysteries wherein our Lord was alone, as in the Garden of Olives, or sitting by the well of Sychar; because when alone she fancied He would suffer her to draw the closer to Him.

Love craves for privacy, and lovers, though they may have no secret to tell, yet delight in secrecy; mainly, perhaps, because they care only to speak to each other, and their manner of converse is peculiar. They do not talk after the common fashion, but in a language of their own. The language of love may be ordinary as to words, but only lovers are familiar with its intonation and utterance.

The word friend, as commonly used, may not convey anything very special, but it becomes wondrously significant when whispered apart. Very wide indeed is the difference between the language of those primitive lovers of God; Ignatius, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Augustine, Hilary, Ephrem, Gregory, and Bernard,—and the drier, less loving theologians of our time! We use the same words; but with them those words breathed forth warmth and perfume, with us they are cold and savourless.

Love speaks not with the lips alone, but with the eyes and expression, and its very silence is eloquent. "My heart hath talked of Thee . . . Thy Face, Lord, will I seek."¹ "Mine eyes long sore for Thy Word, saying, O when wilt Thou comfort me?"² "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with Thine Ears consider my calling; hold not Thy peace at my tears."³ "Let not the apple of Thine Eye cease," as the woful inhabitants of Jerusalem cried out.⁴ Thus the silence of the

¹ Ps. xxvii. 9.

² Ps. cxix. 82.

³ Ps. xxxix. 13.

⁴ Lam. ii. 18.

sorrowful lover speaks in tears. The main point of mystic theology is to speak with and hearken to God in the recesses of the heart; and forasmuch as this dialogue is carried on by very secret aspirations and inspirations, we call it the colloquy of silence. Eye speaks to eye, heart to heart, and none can understand save those devout lovers who take part.

CHAPTER II.

Of Meditation, the first step in Prayer or Mystic Theology.

THIS word is largely used in Holy Scripture, and means an attentive, oft-repeated thought, calculated to excite good or evil affections. In Psalm i. we are told that he is blessed whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who will exercise himself therein, or meditate thereupon day and night. And in the second the Psalmist asks, "Why do the heathen so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing?" whereby we see meditation used alike for good and evil. Generally, however, the word meditation is used in Holy Scripture to indicate the attention fixed on sacred things with a view to increase love for them; and it has been, so to say, canonized by the general consent of theologians, just as angel and zeal are, while demon and woe have been assigned to evil things. So now in speaking of meditation we mean that which is holy; and therein first, mystic theology.

Now all meditation is thought, but all thoughts are not meditation. We frequently are beset by thoughts which have no method or intention, but are altogether desultory, like flies hovering over a flower-bed without object, and this manner of thought cannot be called meditation. At other times we think attentively about somewhat with a view to understand its causes, effects, or quality, and this manner of thought is study,

resembling the cockchafer, who buzzes about leaves and flowers that he may eat them. But when we think about sacred things, not in order to learn, but to kindle our affections, that is really meditating ; and therein the mind resembles neither the fly amusing itself nor the chafer eating its fill, but the bee which goes from flower to flower amid sacred Mysteries, gathering up the honey of Divine Love.

Some there are who continually dwell upon useless thoughts, almost without knowing what they are about. They are attentive only by inadvertence, and do not seek so to cogitate ; they are like Job when he said, "My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart."¹ Others study, and laboriously heap up vanity, but there are few who really meditate with a view to kindling heavenly love within their souls. Thought and study may be bestowed on all manner of things, but the real meditation of which I am speaking has reference only to such matters as are calculated to make us earnest and devout. Practically, meditation is simply thought, attentive, repeated or sustained, with a view to excite the will to holy affections and resolutions. God's Word describes such meditation by a very beautiful similitude : "I will cry out like a young swallow, and meditate like a dove."² If you have ever watched the swallow broods, you will have seen how wide they open their beaks when chirping ; while, on the contrary, doves keep their beaks closed more than any other bird, cooing within the throat and breast, alike in the expression of gladness or sadness. So Isaiah likens his vocal prayer to the cry of the young swallow, and his meditation to the dove, softly swelling within his heart until it be heard of God. Again, he says, "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore

¹ Job xvii. 11.

² The English version has, "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter : I did mourn as a dove ;" but in the Vulgate it is, "Sicut pullus hirundinis sic clamabo, meditaborunt columba" (Isa. xxxviii. 14).

like doves ;”¹ where again the roaring bear represents vocal prayer, and the mourning dove devout meditation. But that it may be remembered how the dove coos not in complaint only, but for joy likewise, the Bridegroom, when describing the spiritual springtide under the likeness of natural spring, says, “The voice of the turtle is heard in our land ;” and again, “O my dove . . . let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely ;”² showing thereby that the devout soul is acceptable to Him when it kindles its spiritual love through pious meditation. Thus he who had said that he would “meditate like the dove,” saith that he will review all his past years in the bitterness of his soul,³ for meditation and cogitation with a view to rousing the affections are one and the same thing. Therefore Moses, after exhorting the people of Israel to “consider in their heart” what God had done for them, goes on to say, “Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.”⁴ And the Lord Himself gave the like precept to Joshua : “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all the laws.”⁵ To “meditate” and to “consider” are used as synonymous in these two passages, and in both the end of consideration and meditation is to be “keeping and doing the law.” The Apostle says in the same sense, “Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds ;”⁶ where by “consider” he plainly means “meditate.” And why would he have us meditate upon the Passion ? Not, surely, that we may become learned, but patient and brave in our heaven-

¹ Isa. lix. 11.² Cant. ii. 12, 14.³ English version, “I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul ;” Vulgate, “*Recogitabo tibi omnes annos meos in amaritudine animæ meæ*” (xxxviii. 15).⁴ Deut. viii. 5, 6.⁵ Josh. i. 8.⁶ Heb. xii. 3.

ward path. "Lord, what love have I unto Thy law, all the day long is my study in it," David cries out.¹ He meditates upon the law because he loves it, and he loves it because he meditates thereupon.

Meditation is the mystic rumination² of which we read in the Canticles, and it was thus that the pure and gentle Isaac "went out to meditate in the field at eventide,"³ to hold converse with his God.

The summer bee flits from flower to flower, not at haphazard, but designedly; not merely to recreate itself amid the garden's pleasant diaper, but to seek honey, and carry it to its hive, to the symmetric comb where it stores its winter food. Even so the devout soul in meditation. It goes from mystery to mystery, not merely as dipping into the beauty of those wondrous matters, but deliberately seeking fresh motives for love and devout affections; and having found these, it feeds upon and imbibes them, and, storing them up within, condenses them into resolutions suitable to the time of temptation. Thus the Heavenly Bride of the Canticles hovers like a bee round the cheek, the lips, the locks of her Beloved, drawing thence innumerable delights, until, kindled with sacred joy, she talks with Him, questions, hearkens, sighs, longs, marvels, while He fills her with content, opens her heart, and fills it with boundless light and sweetness, yet so secretly, that that may be said of this devout communing of the soul with God which we read of Moses: "Moses went up unto God, and God called to him out of the mountain, and they spake one with another."

¹ Ps. cxix. 97.

² The English version loses this sense. The Vulgate is "Guttus tuum sicut vinum optimum, dignum dilecto meo ad potandum, labiisque et dentibus illius ad ruminandum" (vii. 9).

³ Gen. xxiv. 63.

CHAPTER III.

**Contemplation: the first point of Difference between
that and Meditation.**

CONTEMPLATION is nothing else than a mental attitude of loving, simple, persistent attention to holy things, which you may readily understand by comparing it with meditation.

The young bees are called *nympha*, or grubs, until such time as they make honey; and in like manner we call prayer meditation until it produces the honey of devotion, after which it becomes contemplation. For just as the bee goes hither and thither picking up honey, the which when collected it works for the sake of the sweetness thereof; so we meditate in order to gather up God's Love, and having gathered it, we contemplate Him and wait upon His Goodness in order to enjoy the sweetness which Love makes us feel therein. The desire to win Divine Love makes us meditate, but when won, that Love causes us to contemplate; for love shows us so much to admire in the object of our love, that we can never gaze or dwell upon it sufficiently.

Remember the Queen of Sheba, how, having beheld the wisdom of Solomon, the beauty of his house, the splendour of his table and household, the gorgeous raiment of his attendants, the service he had appointed in the Temple, and the like, she remained struck with astonishment, contemplating the whole with a sense of utter enchantment and delight. The sight of such marvels created a strong affection in her, and that affection produced a fresh desire to see and rejoice more and more in the presence of him who caused them, so that she cried out, "Happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and

that hear thy wisdom.”¹ Even so men sometimes begin to eat by exciting their appetite ; but when once that is excited, they go on eating to satisfy it. And we begin by meditating upon God’s Goodness in order to excite our will to love Him ; but that love once roused in the heart, we contemplate the same Goodness in order to satisfy love, which can never sufficiently gaze on its object. In a word, meditation is the mother of love, but contemplation is the daughter ; and consequently I called contemplation a loving attention, for we call children by their fathers’ names, not fathers by those of their children.

Truly, even as Joseph was of old the crown and glory of his father’s old age, so contemplation is the crown and perfection of its parent love. For love, having kindled contemplative attention in the heart, that attention gives birth to a greater, more fervent love, which is finally crowned with perfection when it attains that which it loves. Love takes delight in beholding the Beloved, and the sight of Him makes us rejoice in His Holy Love ; so that by this twofold action love beautifies the object of love, and beauty quickens love. Love has an imperceptible power of enhancing that beauty which we love, and as we gaze our love is quickened. Love gives eyes to see, and sight inflames the heart.

CHAPTER IV.

Love in this World takes its Rise, but not its Perfection, from the Knowledge of God.

WHICH, I would ask, is strongest—love which causes us to gaze upon the Beloved, or sight which makes us love Him? Surely knowledge is essential to the production of love—we cannot love that which we know not ; and in proportion as our

¹ 1 Kings x.

knowledge of good increases, love profits by the growth, provided nothing hinders its action. Nevertheless it often happens that knowledge having given birth to holy love, that love, unfettered by the limits of human knowledge, reaches out far beyond it, so that even in this life love may greatly exceed our knowledge of God, and therefore S. Thomas affirms that often simple women and unlearned persons are capable of and abound more greatly in love than the learned.

The celebrated Andrea de Vercelli, S. Anthony of Padua's master, says several times in his commentary on S. Denys, that love reaches hidden places where external science can never penetrate, illustrating the proposition by his own disciple S. Anthony, who was so profound a mystic theologian that, like S. John Baptist, he might well be called "a burning and shining light." Brother Egidio, one of the first saintly companions of S. Francis, exclaimed once to S. Bonaventura, "O thrice happy ye who are learned, for ye best know how to praise God! but what can we poor ignorant men do?" To which S. Bonaventura made answer, "Grace to love God is enough." "But, father," Brother Egidio persisted, "can an ignorant man love God as well as one who is learned?" "Verily, yes," replied S. Bonaventura; "I tell you, a poor ignorant woman can love God as well as a doctor of theology." Whereupon Brother Egidio cried out, "O poor unlearned woman, love thy Saviour, and thou mayest be even as Brother Bonaventura!" and so engrossed was he by the thought, that for the space of three hours he remained as one rapt!

It is true that the will becomes aware of that which is good by means of the understanding, but having once perceived it, the understanding is not necessary to the exercise of love, for the attraction of that which is good is so strong that the will is powerfully drawn to it, and thus knowledge gives birth to love, though it does not fix the limit thereof. Thus we see that as the

knowledge of an insult rouses anger, which if not forthwith repressed generally becomes disproportionately great ; so the passions are not governed by the knowledge which excites them, but push on without limit towards their object. And this occurs specially in sacred love, the rather that therein the will is turned to it, not by natural knowledge, but by the light of faith, which, convincing us of the infinitude of God's Goodness, gives a sufficient cause for loving Him with all our might. Men dig the earth to seek gold and silver, expending present labour on a gain as yet only hoped for, so that an uncertain knowledge produces a present real labour. And as by degrees they discover the vein of metal, they seek more earnestly. A very little matter serves to stimulate their search, and so a feeble knowledge, enveloped in many mists, as is our faith, attracts us infinitely to the love of that Goodness which it lets us see afar off. And thus what S. Augustine says—that the feeble win heaven, while wise men sink to hell—comes true.

Which would best love the light, a man born blind, who had learnt all that philosophers teach concerning its theories, or the labourer who sees and feels the glorious brightness of the rising sun? The one has more knowledge, the other more enjoyment ; and that enjoyment creates a far more lively love than mere information, for the experience of a good thing is infinitely more attractive than any possible amount of knowledge about it. We begin to love through that knowledge of God's Goodness which faith imparts, and which we proceed to realise by enjoyment ; until love quickens enjoyment, and enjoyment intensifies love ; until, just as the wind and the waves seem to swell one another, so do love and enjoyment, as it is written, "They that eat Me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink Me shall yet be thirsty."¹

Whether of the twain loved God best, the most subtle of all theologians, or S. Catherine of Genoa,

¹ *Ecclus. xxiv. 21.*

a simple woman? Surely the theologian might know God best as to mere knowledge, but she by experience; and her experience led her on to seraphic love, whereas all science never has attained that perfection.

S. Thomas says that men are greatly attracted to the sciences by a mere vague admiration before realising them, and we may say the same of that knowledge of God's Goodness by which the will is attracted to Divine Love; but when once the will is roused, love grows by reason of the very enjoyment which it feels. Before babies have tasted sugar or honey they will scarce touch it, but having once tasted thereof, they are greedily eager to get more.

Still we must confess that the will is more powerfully drawn to union with the object of its delight when the understanding urges its virtues, for then it is both drawn and urged; so that knowledge, far from being opposed, is very helpful to devotion, and when combined they are a great mutual support, although often through our infirmity knowledge hinders the birth of devotion, by puffing up and kindling men's pride, and pride, the foe of all virtue, is absolute ruin to devotion. Assuredly the great wisdom of a Cyprian, an Augustine, Hilary, Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory, Bonaventura, or a Thomas, was not merely a noble accessory, but a mighty quickener of their devotion, as on the other hand their devotion not merely was a stimulant, but a great addition to their knowledge.

CHAPTER V.

The second Difference between Meditation and Contemplation.

MEDITATION dwells, so to say, bit by bit, upon the subjects best calculated to touch the soul, but contemplation takes an entire collective view of its

object, and such joint consideration results in a vigorous action. Just as one may look upon a brilliant crown from two points of view, either examining all its beauties in detail, or looking at the general effect of its enamelled gorgeousness. The first of these processes resembles meditation, wherein we consider, *e.g.*, the effects of Divine Mercy in order to kindle our love. But the second is like contemplation, by which we look at the result of all these effects as a whole, and by one act survey the beauty of many things in a single mass. In meditation we count, so to say, the Divine Perfections contained in a Mystery, in contemplation we sum up the total. The companions of the Bride asked, "What is thy Beloved more than another?" And she describes one by one the details of His perfect Beauty: "My Beloved is white and ruddy, His Head is as the most fine gold; His locks are bushy, and black as a raven; His Eyes as the eyes of doves, His cheeks as a bed of spices, His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, His Hands as gold rings set with beryls, His legs as pillars of marble." And after thus detailing His Beauty as in meditation, she sums up the whole as it were in contemplation: "His Mouth is sweet, yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."¹

Meditation is as though one smelt the pink, rose, thyme, jessamine, rosemary, and orangeflowers severally and distinctly; but contemplation is like the sweet water distilled from all these collectively, for he who smells this receives all these perfumes combined which the other had inhaled separately, and unquestionably the combined scent of all is sweeter than any one taken apart. Blessed are they who, after dilating upon the various reasons they have for loving God, centre all their gaze on one point, all their thoughts on one conclusion, and abide in simple contemplation, like S. Augustine or S. Bruno, crying out continually, "O Goodness, ever old and ever new!" or like S.

¹ Cant. v. 9-16.

Francis, who spent whole nights on his knees repeating, "O God, Thou art my God and my All!" or again, S. Bernard, who having meditated the Passion in detail, gathered up the whole into a cluster of loving sorrow for contemplation, and cried out with the Bride, "A bundle of myrrh is my Well-beloved unto me!"¹

Or again, devoutly gaze upon the world's Creator, how He first meditated upon the excellence of His works in detail, the light, the heavens, and earth, and all living creatures, that they "were good;" until when at last the creation of the universe was achieved, Divine meditation changed, so to say, to contemplation; and looking as it were in contemplation upon His work as a whole, "He saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." Each several part, seen as in meditation, was "good," but contemplated all together they were "very good;" even as many rivulets form one river capable of floating mighty vessels which none of them singly could have borne.

So having roused sundry devout affections by the various considerations which make up meditation, we gather up their essence into a livelier affection than any one taken apart, which though single, combines the virtue of all other affections, and is called contemplative love.

Thus theologians say that the highest among the angels have a more simple knowledge of God than the lower angels, and their perceptions are more universal; so that that which the lower angels see through various processes, the higher orders see more simply and at once. And S. Augustine, followed by S. Thomas, says that in Heaven we shall not be subject to these great vicissitudes and varying processes of thought, but that by a single process we shall be able to appreciate all things. As water flows farther from its source its waves become more broken

¹ Cant. i. 13.

and divided, and so perfections divide and evaporate as they depart from God, their Fount; but near to Him they unite, and are finally lost in that one sovereign perfection which is the "one thing needful" which Mary chose, and which "shall never be taken away" from those who attain to it.

CHAPTER VI.

The third Difference, namely, that Contemplation is pursued without Difficulty.

SIMPLE contemplation is carried out by one or other of these three processes. One while we simply gaze upon some Perfection of God, *e.g.* His Infinite Goodness, without dwelling upon any other attributes. As a bridegroom gazing in admiration upon the beauty of his bride's complexion, who while so doing would gaze upon her whole face, although he did not dwell upon any special feature; so the soul contemplating God's sovereign Goodness sees therein His Justice, Wisdom, and Power, although specially dwelling upon His Goodness alone.

Another time we may contemplate several of God's wondrous Perfections, but under one comprehensive glance; as the bridegroom who might cast his glance over his gorgeously arrayed bride from head to foot, seeing her attire as a whole, without dwelling upon the detail of her ornaments or expression, only knowing that all is beautiful and gracious. And again at other times we may contemplate not any of these Divine Perfections, but some special act, as *e.g.*, the Mercy whereby God forgives sins, the creation, the resurrection of Lazarus, or the conversion of S. Paul, herein resembling the bridegroom who should dwell, not on the eyes of his bride, but on the gentle glances she cast on him, not on her lips, but the sweet words which came forth from them. And then

the soul bursts forth in love, not only with reference to the act contemplated, but to Him whence it proceeds: "Thou art good and gracious: O teach me Thy statutes;"¹ "His Mouth is most sweet; yea, He is altogether lovely;"² "O how sweet are Thy words unto my throat; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth."³ It cries out with S. Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" and with Mary Magdalene, "Master!"

By whichever of these processes contemplation is carried on, all alike it has this quality, *i.e.* it is performed with delight, because the groundwork is having found God and His Holy Love, and rejoicing therein, saying, "I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go."⁴ And in this it differs from meditation, which is almost always a work of toil and effort; the mind working out one consideration after another, and laboriously seeking either the object of its love or the love of its Beloved. Jacob toiled in meditation to win Rachel, but when he rejoiced in her possession he forgot all his toil in contemplation. The Divine Bridegroom in His character of Shepherd made ready a feast for His Bride, in which He describes all the mysteries of man's redemption: "I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly."⁵ Did not our Lord come into His garden when He entered into the most pure womb of His Mother? did He not gather His myrrh and spices in His Passion and Death on the Cross, heaping up merits and treasure on behalf of His spiritual progeny? Did not He eat His honeycomb with His honey when He rose from the dead, and His most pure Soul came again into His pierced Body? And what was His Ascension into Heaven, into the fulness of His Glory, but a drinking of the wine of His Glory together with

¹ Ps. cxix. 68.² Cant. v. 16.³ Ps. cxix. 103.⁴ Cant. iii. 4.⁵ Cant. v. 1.

the milk of His raised Body, after a more perfect fashion than before? And in all these Divine Mysteries, which seem to sum up all else, there is wherewithal to eat and drink for all His friends, yea, to drink abundantly for His best friends. The one eat and drink, but they eat more than they drink, and are not inebriated; the others eat and drink, but they drink far more than they eat, and these are they which are inebriated.¹ Now "eating" is meditation, for meditating we chew, and suck the spiritual food the better to digest it, which is not done without toil. "Drinking" is contemplation, which is done without trouble or effort, easily and with pleasure. But "inebriation" is such constant and ardent contemplation as lifts us altogether out of self into God: a holy and blessed intoxication, which, unlike that of this world, severs us not from the spiritual sense, but from that which is material; does not abase or brutalise us, but rather makes us angelic, not to say Divine; carries us out of self, not to lower us to mere animals like earthly drunkenness, but to lift us above self to the rank of purified spirits, so that we live in God more than in ourselves, being fast bound by love to gaze upon His Beauty and find full union with Him.

And forasmuch as in order to attain to contemplation men need the help of hearing God's Word, of spiritual communing one with another, of reading devout books, of prayer, meditation, singing offices, pondering good thoughts; all these have that end in view, and those who give themselves up to such pursuits we call *contemplatives*; and the life they lead "the contemplative life," because of that act of the understanding whereby we study the truth and beauty of

¹ In the Vulgate the passage is, "Veniat dilectus meus in hortum suum, et comedat fructum pomorum suorum. Veni in hortum meum, soror mea sponsa, messui myrrham meam cum aromatibus meis: comedi favum cum melle meo, bibi vinum meum cum lacte meo: comedete amici, et bibite, et inebriamini charissimi."

God's Goodness with loving attention, which daily increases the measure of our love for the Infinite Sweetness of our Dear Lord.

CHAPTER VII.

The Loving Recollection of the Soul in Contemplation.

I DO not mean by this the recollection which they practise who seek to place themselves in God's Presence, retiring, as it were, within their own heart in order the better to commune with God. Such recollection is the fruit of love, moving us to prayer, and adopting this method of promoting it, so that it is a voluntary act. But the recollection of which I speak is not effected at the bidding of love, but by love itself; that is to say, we do not perform it by our own choice, for it is not in our power to do so when we will, but God performs it in us by His Holy Grace when He pleases. S. Teresa says that it was a happy similitude which compared the prayer of recollection to a hedgehog or tortoise shrinking within itself, except that those creatures can so retire whensoever they will, but recollection does not depend on our will, but on God's Grace.

It is really thus: nothing is more natural to Him Who is All-good than to attract and absorb whatever can appreciate Him, as our souls, which always tend towards their best treasure, are able to do. And so from time to time our Dear Lord sheds an unseen sweetness into the heart, manifesting His Presence; and then the faculties gravitate irresistibly there where the Beloved of the soul is. Just as a fresh swarm of bees when on the wing is gathered together by the tinkling of metal or the scent of honey, or even of certain sweet herbs, and thus coaxed into the hive destined for it; even so our Dear Lord, by some word

of love, or some sweet odour more precious than honey issuing from the hem of His garment, *i.e.* some spark of heavenly comfort within the heart, causes His Presence to be felt, and absorbs all the soul's faculties, centring them on Himself as their One Great Object. And just as if you put a loadstone amid sundry needles all would immediately turn to the attraction of that magnet, and cling to it; so when our Lord makes known His most sweet Presence in the midst of the soul, all its faculties turn thereto, and fain would unite themselves to that incomparable sweetness.

Then indeed the soul cries out with St. Augustine, "Whither do I call Thee, since I am in Thee? I sought Thee afar off, and Thou wert within my heart!" Mary Magdalene's whole thoughts and affections were lavished around the Sepulchre as she sought her Saviour. And even when He came and spoke to her she did not collect them, because she perceived not His Presence; but so soon as He called her by her name, she recollected herself, and held Him by the Feet—one word brought recollection to her.

Think of the Blessed Virgin after she had conceived the Son of God, how her whole soul would be gathered together upon the precious fruit of her womb; how all the faculties of her soul would be collected like bees within their hive; how, in proportion as that Divine Greatness was narrowed and compressed within her pure breast, her soul "magnified" His Praise, and her spirit "rejoiced in God her Saviour." She went not forth beyond herself, inasmuch as all her treasure and joy were contained within her.

Now this holy content may be devoutly imitated by those who in sacramental communion feel, through the conviction of faith, that which is revealed to them, "not of flesh and blood, but of the Father Which is in Heaven;"—namely, that their Saviour is verily present in their souls and bodies by means of the most Blessed Sacrament. And even as the mother-of-pearl closes

¹ Matt. xvi. 17.

after receiving its sweet drops of dew, not merely to avoid all pollution from the sea, but also to enjoy the precious gift which falls from heaven with it; so there are devout souls which, having received that most Precious Sacrament which contains the dew of all heavenly blessings, remain fixed in recollection, not merely in adoration of their Lord present within them, but basking in the unspeakable warmth and refreshment created by that very essence of immortality dwelling with them. Wherein you perceive such recollection is the work of love, which, realising the Presence of the Beloved through the sweetness He brings, draws with all its force and a most willing compliance to Him Who binds hearts to Himself just as men bind the body with cords.

But this precious recollection of the soul is not produced only by the consciousness of a Divine Presence within, but by anything whatsoever whereby we place ourselves under the influence of that Presence. Sometimes all the inner being recollects itself through the intense reverence and holy fear which comes over us at the thought of His sovereign Majesty Who is with us, even as the appearance of some great prince would impress us with respect and awe.

There is a flower which may be said to recollect itself before the sun, which causes it to close its petals, whereas it expands them at night. This manner of recollection is somewhat similar, for the mere Presence of God, or sense thereof, causes all the faculties to collect themselves in adoration of that Divine Majesty, for which love rouses a venerating awe. I once knew a person who was so urgently moved by any word or allusion which brought God's Presence at all more vividly than usual before her, whether in confession or ordinary conversation, that she was almost unable to break the spell by speaking, but was wont to remain as in a trance until the Bridegroom set her free, which was sometimes sooner, sometimes later.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Rest of the Recollected Soul is its Beloved.

WHEN the soul is thus recollected in or before God, it is wont to become so peacefully absorbed in its Beloved One as to be scarcely conscious even that it is absorbed; just as certain rivers flow so smoothly that those who sail upon them hardly realise their motion, seeing no waves or currents. It is this sweet calm which S. Teresa calls the prayer of quietude, which is much the same as what she elsewhere calls a sleep of the active powers.

We all know how earthly lovers can rest in the sight of the person they love without speaking, wholly satisfied in the enjoyment of the beloved presence, not through any definite process of thought, but by the stillness and peace which the spirit finds therein. "A bundle of myrrh is my Well-Beloved unto me; He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts."¹ "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feedeth among the lilies, until the day break, and the shadows flee away."² "Tell me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon."³ The Sulamite Bride is content that her Beloved be with her, or elsewhere, so long as she knows where He is; and so knowing, she is at rest.

At times this rest reaches such a point that the soul and all its powers are as though asleep, the will alone possessing any motion, and it merely accepts the satisfaction which that Presence of the Beloved imparts. And what is more marvellous still, the will receives this satisfaction unconsciously, because it is thinking solely of the Presence which blesses it, not of self; just as sometimes, when half asleep, we almost

¹ Cant. i. 13.² Cant. ii. 16.³ Cant. i. 7.

unconsciously receive the caresses or hear the words of those around.

But however passive the soul may be in this exquisite repose, it testifies clearly to the preciousness of its joy if anything threatens to take away the Beloved Presence, for then indeed the bereaved soul cries out, like a babe rudely wakened from its sleep. And so the Bride exclaims, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please;"¹ that is, until self-aroused. Be sure that the soul thus hushed in its God would not exchange that rest for the greatest of earthly treasures.

This was the repose which the holy Mary enjoyed when she sat at the Feet of her Lord and heard His Word.² There she sat perfectly still, not speaking or weeping, not even praying. Martha was flitting about, cumbered with many things, to which Mary gave no heed. What did she? Nought save listen. And what was it so to listen? It was to be, as it were, a chosen vessel, receiving, drop by drop, the sweet-smelling myrrh which fell from the Lips of her Beloved, and He, jealous for her loving repose, rebuked Martha when she would have roused Mary: "Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that better part, which shall not be taken away from her." What was that "better part"? Resting peacefully and in calmness in the Presence of Jesus.

Painters have often represented S. John, not merely leaning, but actually sleeping on Jesus' Breast at the Last Supper, sitting, as he did, in Oriental fashion. Assuredly it was in no mere material slumber, but who may doubt that, being given thus to approach the Source of everlasting blessedness, he slept a mystic sleep, even as the babe which hangs to its mother's breast, feeding and sleeping at the same time. Joy indeed to that Benjamin, favoured child of his Saviour,

¹ Cant. ii. 7.

² Luke x. 39.

³ Cant. v. 13.

thus to sleep in a Father's Arms, even as the next day he was to be a very Benoni, the child of sorrow, commended to a mother's love. What sweeter to a babe, sleeping or waking, than to rest on a parent's bosom?

If then you attain to such simple filial trust in our Lord, abide therein, without seeking any activity, either of intellect or will, for such loving confidence, and slumber in the Saviour's Arms, combine above all whatever else you could possibly seek. Better far to sleep on that Dear Breast, than to wake under any other possible conditions.

CHAPTER IX.

How to attain this Blessed Repose.

WHO has not seen a hungry infant clinging with an almost painful tenacity to its mother's breast, and then, its appetite satisfied, closing its eyes and falling asleep while yet mechanically sucking, unconsciously imbibing her milk, and yet, while unconscious, ready to wake up and cry were the grateful flow checked? Just so with the soul hushed in rest before God: almost unconsciously it sucks in the sweetness of that Presence without any mental process; only the will is alive, and serves, so to say, as a mouth whereby that sweetness is received, and if aught disturbs that soul, all asleep as it seems, it is evident that it is not asleep to such interruption, which it keenly resents. This is S. Teresa's similitude.

What, indeed, can disturb the soul which is recollected in its God? Surely it has good reason to be at rest, for it has found that which it seeks: "I found Him Whom my soul loveth; I held Him, and would not let Him go."¹ No need to exercise the understanding; it beholds the Bridegroom present, and all words

¹ Cant. iii. 4.

are superfluous. Even if the understanding sees Him not, the soul is at rest, realising His Presence by the sweetness it imparts. Our Lady did not see her Divine Child before His Birth, but she felt Him in her womb, and rejoiced. S. Elisabeth rejoiced in that same Presence at the Visitation without seeing Him. Neither does the soul need any effort of memory, for its Beloved is present; nor of imagination, for who wants to represent that which it actually enjoys? And so the will only is active, sucking, as it were, the milk of that Gracious Presence, all else in the soul being stilled by the sweetness of that delight. Men use a mixture of honey and wine to lure bees to their hive, and also to quiet them when any excitement prevails therein. If they get excited, the scent of such a mixture stills them, and they are soothed by the luscious food. O my God, when Thy Gracious Presence fills man's heart with sweet perfumes, sweeter far than honey and wine, then every faculty of his soul is hushed in a grateful repose, lulled so utterly to rest, that no power save that of the will is awake, and that is unconsciously absorbed in the inconceivable bliss of its Present God!

CHAPTER X.

The Different Degrees of this Quietude, and how to maintain it.

SOME minds are active, fertile, brimming over with thoughts; others are plastic and impressionable, prone to self-dissection, continually taking the measure of their own progress. Others, again, are not content, being satisfied, unless they can continually taste and finger, so to say, their satisfaction; like one who was not content to be well armed against the cold unless he knew exactly how many coverings he bore; or who could not rest, knowing himself to be rich,

unless he could reckon the precise number of pieces of money he possessed.

Now all such as these are wont to be uneasy in their meditation, for if God vouchsafes them the blessed rest of His Presence, they are ready to forsake it in order to investigate how they are using it, whether they are really satisfied, whether their tranquillity is tranquil, and the like ; so that instead of surrendering their will to the sweetness of the Divine Presence, they employ their minds in weighing feelings, as though a bride trifled with her wedding ring instead of devoting herself to the husband who gave it her. There is a wide difference between being occupied with God Who satisfies us, and trifling with the satisfaction He bestows.

The soul, then, to which God gives a holy, loving quietude in prayer, should abstain, as far as may be, from inspecting self or that rest, which is in danger of being lost by overmuch contemplation, and the true way of prizing it is not to pay too much heed to it. The babe which has turned from its mother's breast to see where it abides, is in haste to lay its head again on that pillow ; and so if we find that curiosity to know what progress we make in prayer has disturbed us, the safest course is to turn back quietly to God's Presence, and seek to rest therein once more.

There is no fear, however, of losing that holy quietude by such activity, mental or bodily, as does not spring from carelessness or indiscretion. S. Teresa says that it is mere superstition to be afraid of any physical movement as likely to disturb it ; for God, Who gives this peace, will not take it away because of unavoidable movements, or because of involuntary distractions, and when once the will is firmly set to seek God's Presence, it will enjoy His Sweetness even if the memory or understanding should wander. Of course the soul's peace is not so entire as if these were at one with the will, but still there is a very real spiritual peace when the will, which is ruler of all other

faculties, is at rest. I have seen a soul very really united to God, which nevertheless had both memory and understanding fully alive and clear to surrounding circumstances, although unable to let go its hold upon God through the will, and that to such an extent, that any effort to loosen this hold produced lamentation, like to a babe torn from the breast. But unquestionably the soul's peace would be greater and sweeter if there were no disturbance, mental or bodily, presented to it. Its longing is to be wholly engrossed by the Divine Presence ; but when inevitably distracted as to the other faculties, at all events the will remains at peace. Observe, too, that the will is not even roused to recall the other wandering faculties ; for were it to be so roused it would lose its own peace, and run the risk of distraction from its true aim while pursuing those uncertain powers. Nor can they ever be so profitably recalled to duty as by the perseverance of the will in holy quietude, for gradually all the faculties become enthralled by the pleasure which the will receives in this loving rest, a pleasure which it imparts to the whole being, attracting it to share that delight.

CHAPTER XI.

Self-Abnegation in this Matter.

THUS we see that holy quietude may be of different degrees ; sometimes in all the faculties united to the will, sometimes in the will only, and in it either sensibly or imperceptibly ; the soul one time enjoying an inexpressibly sweet interior sense of God's Presence, as S. Elisabeth in the Visitation ; at another an intensely blessed craving for God, like the disciples at Emmaus, who only recognised the Lord's Presence in the breaking of bread. Sometimes the soul does not merely perceive God's Presence, but hears Him speak through certain interior lights which take the

place of words ; another time it feels Him speaking, and answers again so secretly, so gently, that its peace is nowise broken, so that without waking it watches, like the Bride in the Canticles ;^{*} and again at times it hears the Bridegroom speaking, but is kept silent itself by very joy and reverence, or by an exhaustion which leaves it power only to hear, not to speak, as one who is feeble with illness, or just falling asleep.

Again, sometimes the soul neither hears nor speaks to, nor has any conscious sign of the Beloved, but simply realises that it is in God's Presence, and that He wills it so to be. Supposing S. John to have slept in actual physical slumber on his Dear Lord's Breast at Supper, and by His command, surely he had then been in his Master's Presence without feeling conscious of it in any way.

Observe, too, that we need more care in order to place ourselves in God's Presence than to abide there when once so placed, because thought and actual attention are needed, as I have already said, to place ourselves in His Presence. But once in it, we maintain the position by various means : through the understanding or will, by doing something in or for God ; by gazing on Him, or on something for love of Him ; hearing Him, or those who speak on His behalf ; speaking to Him, or His representatives ; doing somewhat for His honour and service. And by these means we abide in God's Presence, not merely listening, watching, or speaking to Him, but waiting till He may vouchsafe to look upon or speak to us, or it may be, simply abiding where He would have us, because it is His Will. And if to such abiding He vouchsafes to add some conscious feeling that we are His and He is ours, great and precious indeed is the gift.

Let us indulge in a passing illustration. Suppose some statue in a royal gallery to be gifted with understanding, and to be asked, "Wherefore art thou in this niche?" it would reply, "Because my master

^{*} "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

placed me here." "Wherefore abidest thou passively there?" "Because my master put me here, not to do anything, but to stand passive." And did the questioner proceed to ask, "Alas, poor statue! what good is it to thee thus to dwell?" it would surely answer, "I am not here on my own behalf, but in obedience to the will of my maker and master, and that is enough." "But thou beholdest him not, how then canst thou take pleasure in serving him?" "I see him not," the answer would be, "for my eyes are not given to see, nor my feet to walk; but I am well content to know that my dear lord sees me where I am, and is satisfied." Did we press the matter yet a little further, and ask, "Wouldst not thou fain be able to walk towards thy maker, and do him worthier service?" doubtless the statue would reply that it wished for nought save what its master willed. "Askest thou then nothing save to be a motionless statue in thy niche?" And the statue would say, "I desire nought save to be a statue, and abide in my niche, so long as the sculptor wills it so; it contents me wholly, inasmuch as it contents him whose I am, and who made me what I am."

Verily, it is a blessed way of abiding in God's Presence! and thereby, come what may, we are safe to be ever most really in it, even in sleep. For if we love Him, we fall asleep not merely in His Sight, but at His Will, and our Creator and Divine Sculptor lays us down upon our beds as a statue in its niche or a bird in its nest, and, waking, we shall find that God was ever present, and that we have been neither removed nor separated from Him. We were present to His Holy Will and Pleasure, though without our own consciousness, so that we may say with Jacob, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."¹ And this quietude wherein the will acts merely by simple acquiescence in God's good Pleasure is very excellent, inasmuch as it is totally disinterested,

¹ Gen. xxviii. 16.

because neither the faculties nor the will seek any satisfaction therein, save in entire and absolute submission to God, in Whom they find total rest. The very climax of a loving extasy is to merge the will, not in one's own content, but in that of God; not to find contentment in one's own will, but in the Will of God.

CHAPTER XII.

How the Soul flows into God.

FLUIDS readily accept the limits assigned them, inasmuch as they have no solidity or firmness wherewith to create a limit for themselves. Pour water into a vessel, and it will assume the limits of that vessel, being neither round nor square itself, but according to the shape of the vessel.

It is not thus with the soul naturally, for it has its own form and natural measure. The first comes from its habits and inclinations, the latter from its will, and when it cleaves persistently to its likings and will we call it hard—that is to say, obstinate. “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh,” God says;¹ that is, I will remove your obstinacy. To change the form of stone, iron, or wood, we need the help of axe, hammer, and fire; and so the epithet of iron, or stony, or wooden, heart is given to him who does not willingly receive Divine impressions, but cleaves to his own will and to the inclinations of a depraved nature. On the contrary, a gentle, tractable heart we call a melting heart. David, speaking typically of our Lord upon the Cross, says, “My heart in the midst of my body is like melting wax.”² Cleopatra, striving to exceed Mark Antony in the lavishness of her banquet, threw a pearl earring, valued at a mighty price, into a vessel of vinegar to dissolve, and swallowed it, proceeding to

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

² Ps. xxii. 14.

deal after the same fashion with its fellow, had not Lucius Plautus hindered her. The Heart of the Saviour, the pearl of priceless value, cast as it was into an ocean of incomparable bitterness in His Passion, was voluntarily melted, and flowed away in a stream of grief beneath His mortal Anguish ; but love, which is stronger than death, softens and melts the heart sooner than aught beside. The Bride in the Canticles says that her soul melted within her when she heard the Bridegroom's Voice.¹ And what was that melting, save that she was no longer self-contained, but flowed out to her Divine Lover ?

God bade Moses "speak unto the rock," and it should bring forth water ;² so no wonder if He melted the soul of her who loved Him with the sweetness of His Words. Balm is naturally so thick that it does not flow, and by dint of keeping it will become hard and transparent, but heat melts and liquefies it. And so with love ; even as the Bride says, "Thy Name is as ointment poured forth."³ Moreover, she herself melted with very love : "My soul melted [E.V. 'failed'] when He spake."⁴ Love of the Bridegroom was in her breast like new wine in a vessel, bursting forth by reason of its vehemence : "Thy love is better than wine . . . as ointment poured forth,"—each flowed into the heart of the other. When the sun's rays fall upon a polished blade it seems to lose its form, and melt into that dazzling brilliancy ; and so the soul of the Bride melts into that of the Bridegroom when she hears His Voice, and is drawn wholly into Him.

How does this outpouring of the soul into the Beloved take place ? A lover's intense delight in the object of his love produces a certain spiritual powerlessness which deprives the soul of any self-restraint, and therefore, like melted balm, it flows into Him it loves. It is not casting itself in, or pressing up to

¹ "Anima mea liquefacta est," in the Vulgate (Cant. v. 6). In the English version it is, "My soul failed when He spake."

² Numb. xx. 8.

³ Cant. i. 2.

⁴ Cant. v. 6.

Him, but a gentle outpour into the Divine Being Who is its Sole Delight. Even as the clouds which rise up on the south wind can no longer contain themselves, but fall on the earth in rain, and mingle with the earth into which they sink, until they are lost in it ; so the soul flows forth in this holy outpour, and loses itself, not merely by union with the Beloved, but by being utterly mingled with and merged in Him.

Thus the flowing forth of the soul to God is practically an extasy by means of which it is carried wholly beyond its natural limits, by which it is swallowed up and absorbed in God. And therefore those who have attained to so great a height of sacred love, on coming to themselves again, finding nothing to satisfy them on earth, seem to hang to it by a mere thread, and cry out perpetually with S. Teresa, "That which is not God is nothing to me !" Such as this was the passionate love of S. Paul when he exclaimed, "I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me :"¹ "Our life is hid with Christ in God."² Supposing a single drop of rain to be thrown into an ocean of distilled water, and to be able to speak, we could fancy it crying out, "Verily, I live, but not in myself, but it is this ocean which lives in me, and my life is hidden in its abyss." The soul which has flowed into God dies not :—how could it die when swallowed up of life ? But it lives, not as of itself ; for even as the stars do not shine in the presence of the sun, albeit they retain their light, and that because it comes from the sun, and is hidden by the sun's greater light ;—so the soul yet lives, but only as flowing into God, so that God lives in it. This, doubtless, was what those saintly men Philip Neri and Francis Xavier meant when, literally overwhelmed by the sweetness of heavenly bliss, they intreated God to hold His Hand if He willed them yet awhile to live in the world, for verily their life seemed wellnigh hidden and swallowed up in God.

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² Col. iii. 3.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Wound of Love.

ALL such expressions are borrowed from the similitude we find between the heart's affections and the passions of the body. Sadness, fear, hope, hate, and the like affections of the soul, do not enter the heart save as they are drawn in by love. We do not hate evil save because it is opposed to that good which we love ; we fear a future evil only because it will deprive us of that good. However great an evil, we only hate it in proportion to our value for its opponent good. He who cares not deeply for the welfare of his country will be indifferent to its ruin, neither will he who loves not God truly hate sin sincerely. Love is the first and chief principle of all passions, and so it first finds entrance in the heart ; and inasmuch as it penetrates and pierces to the very depths of the will where it reigns, we say that love wounds the heart. Love is sharp, and penetrates the inmost recesses of the mind. Other affections may enter in, but only by means of love, which pierces and opens a way for them only. The point of the dart wounds ; all that follows does but increase the wound and the smart.

That which wounds gives pain. S. Gregory says that the pomegranate with its bright hue, its serried rows of seeds, and its crown, is a fit emblem of holy love,—red with ardent love to God, full of all manner of virtues, and crowned with an eternal reward. But the juice of the pomegranate, grateful as it is to all, is so mixed up of bitter and sweet that one can scarce say which it is which pleases the taste. And even so love is bitter-sweet ; and while in this world we shall find no joy wholly sweet, because none is perfect or thoroughly satisfying, although sharpness and sweet-

ness are so blended as to cause us infinite delight. How can these things be?

Verily we have all seen a youth enter society, vigorous and free, who in his heedlessness is captured before he goes forth by love disguised beneath the glance of some frail, foolish being, whose shafts have touched his heart, and he becomes sorrowful and sad. Wherefore? Because he is wounded. But who has wounded him? Love. Yet if love be the offspring of delight, how can it wound and pain? Because sometimes the loved one is absent, and then love wounds the heart with longings, and these, when unsatisfied, grievously torment the mind.

If a child is stung by a bee, it is vain to tell it that the bee which has made the wound makes likewise that luscious honey which pleases its palate. "The honey is very sweet," he will reply, "but this sting hurts, and my face is swollen!" Assuredly love is a delight, and in so far acceptable, provided it does not leave behind the sting of desire; but when that remains, pain must exist. Assuredly there is somewhat soothing in the smarting which comes of love. Listen to the outcries of the royal lover: "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the Living God; when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God?"¹ and the Bride of the Canticles says, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell Him that I am sick of love;"² "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick."³

There are various wounds of love. Its first shafts we call wounds, because the heart which seemed whole and healthy before, begins, so soon as it is struck, to break up and flow over to the beloved object. And such separation cannot be painless, since the very essence of pain is the division of living parts one from the other.

Then desire continually pricks and wounds the

¹ Ps. xlii. 2, 3.

² Cant. v. 8.

³ Prov. xiii. 12.

heart which experiences it. But in Divine Love there is a special wound which God sometimes inflicts Himself upon the heart He designs to perfect. To such He gives intense longings and cravings after His matchless Goodness, until the heart bounds vehemently towards Him, when, forced to stop short, and unable to love as it fain would do, it suffers proportionately. While so powerfully drawn to take wing, it is as powerfully withheld by the infirmities of this mortal life and its own frailty; it longs for the wings of a dove that it may win rest, but finds them not. Thus it is distracted between the impulses of love and its own powerlessness. "O wretched man that I am!" one thus tried exclaimed; "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"¹ Here, you will observe, the wound is not a desire for that which is absent, for the soul feels its God present, and already possesses Him; He has already "brought it to His banqueting-house, and His banner over it is love."² But though already conqueror, He further lets fly endless shafts of love, displaying in a succession of loving ways how great His Grace is, and the soul, unable to mount up whither it would attain, and seeing how contemptible all its efforts are in proportion to that love it would fain duly return, is distracted with pain, for every futile effort to rise higher is a fresh pang.

The heart which craves after an infinite love realises its incapacity to love or long enough; and this unsuccessful craving is as a barbed arrow in the generous soul, while yet its very pain is sweet, because he who longs to love is glad to long, and would indeed be most miserable if he ceased to crave continually for that which is to be loved beyond all things. Longing to love, he suffers; but loving to long, he rejoices.

The very blessed in Paradise, beholding the Infinite Beauty of God, would faint and fail from longing to love Him more if His most Holy Will did not fill them

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

² Cant. ii. 4.

with His Own sweet Rest. But they love His sovereign Will so entirely that theirs is wholly merged in it, and they rest content in His Content, willing to submit to the limit Love puts to love. Were it not so, their love would be alike delicious and poignant—delicious in the possession of so great a gift, poignant in the intensity of desire for more. Thus God in His Wisdom sends perpetual shafts into the heart of those who love Him, to teach them that they do not love Him nearly so much as He deserves to be loved. And be sure that the man who does not crave to love God more does not as yet love Him well enough. There is no “enough ;” and he who would stop short in what he has attained has attained but little, be sure.

CHAPTER XIV.

Some other Ways by which Holy Love wounds the Heart.

NOTHING so wounds the loving heart as beholding another heart wounded by love for it. The pelican makes her nest on the ground, so that her chicks are often bitten by serpents. Then the mother-bird, with instinctive surgery, pricks her young with her beak, to let the venom forth with their blood, and to get rid of all the venom she lets all their blood flow, and so the brood perishes. But when she sees them dead she pierces her own body, and pours out her own blood upon them, and restores them to a better life ; her love wounded them, and by that same love she wounds herself. We can never wound any heart with love without being forthwith wounded ourselves ; so when the soul beholds its God pierced with love for it, it cannot fail to be pierced itself. “Thou hast ravished [or pierced] my heart,” says the Divine Bridegroom :¹ “Tell ye my Beloved that I am sick of

¹ Cant. iv. 9.

love.”¹ When a bee stings it always dies. Even so look upon the Saviour of souls wounded for love of us unto the death of the Cross, and how can ye not be wounded for love of Him, and that with a wound more sorely loving than His was lovingly sore, forasmuch as we can never love Him in proportion to what His Love and Death demand?

There is another wound of love, when the soul is conscious of loving its God, and yet He treats it as though He did not recognise or mistrust that love. The merest shadow of such a trial is wellnigh insupportable to a loving soul. Thus S. Peter was brimming over with love when the Lord asked, “Lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. . . . He saith to him again the second time, Lovest thou Me? . . . Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” And then, in order to prove him, once more the Lord asked, “Lovest thou Me?” Ah, Dear Lord, how sharply dost Thou wound that grieving heart which cries out in sorrowing love, “Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee”!²

One suffering from possession was being exorcised in the presence of S. Catherine of Genoa, when, on bidding the evil spirit tell his name, he replied that he was “the wretch that had lost love,” whereupon the Saint wellnigh swooned at the thought; for just as evil spirits so abhor Divine Love that they tremble at the Name of Jesus or the Sign of the Cross, so those who greatly love the Lord tremble at any sight or sound implying the deprivation of that Holy Love.

S. Peter knew well that our Lord, knowing all things, could not fail to know his love; but inasmuch as the repeated query, “Lovest thou Me?” implied mistrust, he was sorely grieved. Verily, he who knows it would rather perish than offend God, yet is devoid of any spark of fervour, and only feels the chilling, numbing sense of his own imperfections; he is deeply wounded

¹ Cant. v. 8.

² John xxi.

for his love mourns because God makes as though He saw not that love, and he feels as though God reproached him for that coldness and those imperfections. Yet all the while be sure he would not fear to be counted loveless did he not really love.

Sometimes the wound comes merely from a remembrance of the time when we did not love God. "Oh, how late have I learnt to love Thee, Divine Beauty ever new and ever old!" exclaimed S. Augustine. That past life without God is abhorrent to him who has at length learnt to adore God's sovereign Goodness and Love.

Sometimes, too, love wounds the soul with the mere recollection of the multitudes who despise God's Love; as David, when he cried out, "My zeal hath even consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words."¹ And S. Francis, being, as he thought, alone, was heard sobbing so piteously, that one, hearing, hurried to his succour, and finding him alone, asked, "Why criest thou out thus?" to which the answer came, "I wept to think how great things our Lord bore for love of us, and no man heeds it." Whereupon he began to weep anew, and the other to weep with him.

Yet, be the wounds what they may, one thing is notable, namely, that their pain is acceptable, and all those who bear it do so willingly, and would not change that sorrow for all earthly joys. There is no bitterness in love, or at least it is a cherished bitterness. A seraph once cast a golden dart, with a point as of flame, into the heart of S. Teresa, who, when he would have withdrawn it, felt as though she were being torn asunder, so sharp was the pain, and yet so sweet that she would fain have borne it for ever. And similar was the dart of love which God winged at the heart of S. Catherine of Genoa in the beginning of her conversion, whereby she became as one dead to the world and all created things, living only to her Creator.

¹ Ps. cxix. 139.

The Beloved One is truly a bundle of myrrh, and the bundle of myrrh is the Beloved Who lies ever in the breast of the loving soul, best beloved among all created things.

CHAPTER XV.

The Loving Weakness of the Soul wounded by Love.

IT is a recognised fact that earthly love will not merely pierce the heart, but make the body sick unto death, and that because, just as physical passion and temperament greatly influence the soul, so the soul's affections have great power over the body. And beyond that, ardent love drives the soul so forcibly towards the object of its affection, and so engrosses it, that it falls short in all else, whether sensitive or intellectual; so that by reason of that love the soul neglects all other objects, itself included.

Plato says that love is poor, ragged, miserable, homeless: poor, because it leaves all for the object of its love; homeless, because it goes forth to follow that object; pale and miserable, because it forgets to eat, drink, or sleep; ragged and bare, because it casts aside everything to clothe itself with the beloved one; it lies like a beggar at the door, ever watching the eyes and lips of that beloved, begging, so to say, one scrap of notice; and ever poor, because if it were once satiated it would cease to be ardent, and so cease to be love.

Of course Plato speaks only of the poor worthless love which worldlings bear, but it is just the same with Heavenly Love. Listen to what one of the first teachers of evangelic love has said: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted; and have no certain dwelling-place . . . we are made as the filth of the world, and are

the off-scouring of all things unto this day."¹ As though he said, We are so abject, that if the world be a palace we are as its dust, if the world be a fruit we are as its rind. But what save love had made them thus? It was love which caused S. Francis to kneel bare before his Bishop, and to die on the naked earth; it was love which caused him to be a beggar all his life; it was love which drove S. Francis Xavier forth amid poverty and nakedness to convert the Indies; it was love which reduced S. Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, to such poverty amid the wealth belonging to his birth and position, that, as a great orator tells us, he was as a dog in his master's house, eating nought save a crust of bread, drinking water only, and sleeping on a handful of straw.

Listen to the Bride of the Canticles, how she exclaims that, all-beautiful as she is by reason of the Bridegroom's favour, yet she is "black" by reason of the wounds of love: "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me,"² rays of love so penetrating and scorching that they consumed her. Love makes her "mother's children angry with her;" she, princess though she be, is as a humble vinedresser, unable to "keep her own vineyard."

Yes, verily, when the wounds of love are many and sharp, they cause us to faint and fail with the gracious sickness of love. Who can describe the loving maladies of S. Catherine of Sienna, or her of Genoa, S. Angela di Foligni, S. Christina, S. Teresa, S. Bernard, or S. Francis, whose life was, so to say, one long swoon of love, and who received from his Dear Lord the precious marks of His Passion in the stigmata? Many a time I have pondered that marvel, and with this result. I believe that that great servant of God, angelic as he was, beholding the Living Image of his Crucified Lord, as shown him by an angel of light, was moved beyond all we can imagine with love and

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 11, 13.

² Cant. i. 6.

tenderness at that glorious sight on which the angels cannot fitly gaze ; while, on the other hand, beholding the wounds of that Dear Lord, he felt the sword which had pierced the Blessed Virgin's soul ¹ even as though he were literally crucified with his Master. And surely if a picture of Abraham about to sacrifice his son, painted by a mere man, could cause S. Gregory of Nyssa to weep every time he looked thereon, how great might S. Francis' emotion well be on beholding the representation of the Saviour's Sacrifice traced by an angel's hand ! Thus that loving soul, melting with pity and tenderness, was well prepared to receive the stamp of His Beloved in love and sorrow. His memory was steeped in that sorrow, his imagination was filled with its details ; his understanding accepted them, while love disposed all the faculties of his will to entire conformity with the Passion. And so the empire of the soul over the body became so urgent that it stamped the impression of the Saviour's wounds on the corresponding members of His adoring servant.

Love knows how to quicken imagination till it pierces through and through, and love sharpened the interior sufferings of that most loving Saint until they pierced to the surface, and his body bore the marks of that same sorrow which had wounded his heart. Yet that inner love could not actually pierce the flesh ; and therefore the seraphim, casting the rays of his burning brightness on the Saint, actually marked on his outer members those wounds which love had printed inwardly on his soul, making it a very crucifix. Even so we read how when the Prophet Isaiah knew not how to speak the Lord's message, one of the seraphim flew to him, and with a live coal touched his lips, thereby purifying and strengthening him.² Myrrh oozes forth from its parent stem as a gum, but to obtain the produce there must be incisions duly made. Even so Divine Love continually transpired through S. Francis' life, but to bring forth its full

¹ Luke ii. 35.

² Isa. vi.

abundance there needed the seraphim to pierce and wound him. And that we might know those wounds to be of Heaven, they were made, not with steel, but with rays of light. Verily, they were wounds of love, and all the rest of his days the Saint went softly, as one dying of love.

The Blessed Philip Neri, when twenty-four, was so physically affected by Divine Love that the enlargement of his heart caused a fracture in his ribs ; and S. Stanislas Kotzka, when only fourteen, was wont to faint under the pressure of his love for his Lord, so that it was needful to lay cold bandages upon his breast to still its burning heat.

How, indeed, should the soul which has once tasted the sweetness of Divine Love bear to live on amid this miserable world without a continual pain and longing? S. Francis Xavier used to be heard crying out, "Enough, Lord, enough!" and asking that so great an overflow of sweetness might take him to Paradise, for it was too much to bear on earth. If God grants a free outpour of His Divine Blessings to the soul, and then holds His Hand, it is sore wounded by the privation, and cries out with David, "When shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?"¹ or with S. Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"²

¹ Ps. xlii. 2.

² Rom. vii. 24.

BOOK VII.

THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH ITS GOD AS PERFECTED BY PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

The Union of the Soul with God in Prayer is through Love.

I AM not now speaking of a general union of the heart to God, but of certain individual acts and aspirations which the recollected soul makes in prayer, the better to unite itself with His Divine Goodness. Assuredly there is a difference between uniting or joining one thing to another, and drawing or pressing them closely together. For the first end it will suffice to put the things together so that they may touch, just as we unite our vines or jessamines to the trelliswork of a garden arbour; but in drawing or binding them we apply a strong pressure which greatly promotes union, even as ivy unites itself to a tree, not merely hanging on it, but drawing so forcibly to it as actually to penetrate the bark.

The purity and innocence of a little child's love for its mother is an instance. See that lovely babe as its mother offers it the breast, how it throws itself with all the energy of its tiny frame into her lap, nestling up to her tender bosom, while the mother presses it closely to her, kissing and fondling it. Mother and babe seem to have but one existence between them, so fondly does he co-operate in that clinging embrace, as though he was fain to bury himself in the maternal bosom whence he drew his life.

And so this union is perfect, it is equal as regards both mother and child ; and yet it originates actually with the mother, for it was she that attracted the babe, she that first drew it into her arms and pressed it to her bosom, nor could the feeble child have clung so tightly to her of itself. Yet the frail little being does all it can, and clings with all its might to the maternal breast, not merely accepting the union its mother offers, but heartily co-operating with its baby powers. Baby powers indeed, for they are so weak as to be rather attempts at union than union itself.

Even so our Dear Lord offers the breast of His Divine Love to the devout soul ; He draws, gathers it into the lap of His more than motherly Tenderness, and then, burning with love, He embraces the soul, presses it to His Heart, kisses it with the sacred kisses of His Mouth, makes it taste of that love which is better than wine.¹ And so the soul, intoxicated with delight, not merely consents and yields to this Divine union, but co-operates with all its might thereto, while all the time it thoroughly realises that its union with this Heavenly Sweetness depends wholly upon His Will, without the grace of which it would be totally unable to make the smallest attempt at union.

When any great beauty, or exquisite melody, or marvellous eloquence absorbs the attention of men, we say that it fixes their gaze, or ravishes their ear, or masters their heart. What does this mean, save that the senses and their faculties are drawn and pressed to the absorbing object ? Even so the soul presses and cleaves when it greatly loves, for pressure is but the progress of union. Even in common things we use such language : " He presses me to do this ; he presses me to abide," *i.e.* he is not content with persuasion or intreaty, but he employs urgency and effort, like to the disciples at Emmaus, who not only intreated the Lord to abide with them, but forcibly pressed Him, "constraining Him" with loving violence.

¹ Cant. i.

Now in prayer union is often attained by means of tiny but frequent upliftings of the soul to God. And so if you watch a babe nestling to its mother's breast, you will see it frequently quiver with, so to say, fresh spasms of delight. Thus the soul that is united to God in prayer makes fresh efforts whereby it presses up closer and closer to His Gracious Love, crying out, "Lord, I am Thine, wholly, utterly! and I would be Thine ever more and more. O Sweet Jesus, draw me closer and closer to Thee, until I be altogether swallowed up of love!"

But at other times this union increases not so much by these efforts as by a continual though unconscious pressure and advance made by the heart upon God's Goodness. Just as we have seen a heavy mass of lead or stone create such a pressure on the ground where it lies that without any extraneous aid it becomes fairly buried in the soil after awhile; so the heart once joined to God, if it abide undisturbed, will go on insensibly sinking deeper in that union, until at last it be altogether lost in Him, by reason of the sacred longing for ever-increasing nearness to God which holy love inspires.

It was said by the great Apostle of France that love is a unitive virtue, *i.e.* one which tends to perfect union with our Sovereign Good. And inasmuch as it is an unquestionable truth that so long as we are in this world Divine Love is a movement, or at anyrate an activity tending thereto, it does not cease to act because it has attained to simple union, but goes on, however imperceptibly, striving to confirm and perfect its union.

Thus trees which bear transplanting spread forth their roots and penetrate the soil which is their element and aliment, though no one sees aught save the result. And the heart of man, transplanted into God from out the world by Heavenly Love, and fervent in prayer, will assuredly spread itself out and come closer to Him, being more and more united with Him,

yet by such imperceptible progress, that it cannot be discerned while making, but only in its result. If you drink some powerful cordial it becomes part of yourself by the mere act of swallowing, since in this case reception and union are the same thing; but gradually this union will sensibly increase, for the virtue of the cordial will penetrate your system, invigorating and cheering it. And in like wise an impulse—say of dilection, such as, “How good is God!”—having entered the heart, a simple union exists at first, but having been fostered as a precious guest, it speedily penetrates the soul, it spreads and expands the will, taking possession of the mind, drawing us closer and closer to God, and He to us. This is what David means when he says that God’s Words are “sweeter than honey,”¹ for all men know that honey becomes sweeter by prolonged tasting, and that if we hold it in the mouth, or swallow it slowly, it takes more entire possession of the organ of taste. Just so let a loving heart grasp such a sense of Divine Love as is expressed in S. Bruno’s cry, “O Goodness!” or S. Thomas’s, “My Lord and my God!” or the Magdalene’s, “Hail, Master!” or S. Francis’, “My God and my All!” and lingering there, it will spread and penetrate through the mind, impregnating it with its own flavour, practically increasing union, just as balm, or any other precious oil, dropped upon cotton wool, spreads gradually until you scarce can say whether the cotton be perfumed or perfume itself. Blessed indeed is the soul which lovingly preserves the sacred consciousness of the Presence of God within itself. The union of that soul with God will be ever increasing, however insensibly, and it will penetrate and imbue every corner of his being with its priceless sweetness. And by this holy consciousness of God’s Presence I here mean, not a sensible consciousness, but that which dwells in the superior part of the mind where Divine Love reigns and acts.

¹ Ps. cxix. 103.

CHAPTER II.

**The various Degrees of Holy Union with God
which are found in Prayer.**

SOMETIMES union is accomplished without any co-operation of ours save a simple yielding to Divine Goodness, just as a weary babe which can make no effort to go to its mother, but which nevertheless rejoices to be enfolded in her arms and pressed to her bosom.

So, again, we co-operate, when, being drawn, we run willingly after the Loving Power Which draws and binds us by the strength of love. Another time we seem to begin pressing close to God before He draws near to us, because we feel the movement on our own side, and do not feel that of God, which nevertheless is continually preventing us, although we are often unconscious of it. For verily, did He not unite Himself to us, we could never unite ourselves to Him; He chooses and claims us before we choose or claim Him. But when, following His imperceptible drawings, we begin to unite ourselves to Him, He sometimes speeds our progress, strengthening our weakness, and drawing so near to us that we seem to feel Him entering in and filling our heart with untold sweetness. Sometimes, again, His aid is given as insensibly as His first drawing, and we, knowing not how so mighty a union was made, only knowing that we had no power of ourselves to make it, are led to believe that a Hidden Power has wrought insensibly in us; even as a pilot whose ship is laden with iron, when he sees it move vigorously without a strong breeze, knows that it must be near some hidden loadstone which attracts it. Thus when we are conscious that our mind is increasingly united to God by our own feeble effort,

while acknowledging that we are not sailing under any self-raised breeze, we know that the Lover of souls is sweetly drawing us, although He does it imperceptibly, so that we may not waste our time on the means, but give our whole attention to the result. At other times this union arises so imperceptibly that the heart feels neither the Divine workings nor any co-operation of its own, but it wakes up to an already existing union, like Jacob, who found himself unconsciously married to Leah ; or rather like a new Samson, bound with the cords of holy union unawares. Or it may be we realise the operation, this union being accomplished by conscious movement on God's part and on our own.

Sometimes union is achieved by our own will, which, again, may draw the understanding, and fix it in strong delight upon the object of love, just as love is wont to fix our bodily vision upon that which we love.

Sometimes this union embraces all the faculties of the soul, concentrating them on the will, not in order to unite themselves to God, for they are incapable of that, but rather to make it easier to the will to make such union. For if the faculties be distracted, each in its own channel, the soul cannot uninterruptedly seek its union with God. Great is the variety of such unions.

Consider S. Martial, who is believed to have been the happy child taken by our Lord into His Arms.¹ Blessed child, to be thus borne and taken to the breast of thy Saviour, receiving the embrace of His Love without any co-operation on thine own part, save that of unresisting readiness ! S. Simeon, on the other hand, pressed our Lord to his breast, while He apparently had no share in the union, although verily, as the Church sings, "the old man carried the Child, but the Child ruled the man."²

¹ Mark ix. 36.

² Antiphon for the "Magnificat" at 1st Vespers of the Purification : "Senex puerum portabat, puer autem senem regebat."

S. Bonaventura, in his deep humility, not only did not unite himself to his Lord, but withdrew from His Sacramental Presence, until one day, as he heard Mass, our Lord Himself gave him the Blessed Sacrament. Who can conceive the love with which that saintly soul clasped his Saviour to his breast after such a union! S. Catherine of Sienna, on the contrary, so intensely longed after the Lord in Holy Communion, so fervently craved after Him, that He gave Himself into her mouth. Thus He took the initiative with S. Bonaventura, while S. Catherine seemed to take it with Him. The Bride of the Canticles refers to both kinds of union: "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me."¹ I have united myself to Him, and He has in like manner turned towards me to unite Himself to me, and be wholly mine. "A bundle of myrrh is my Well-Beloved unto me; He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts."² And David says with like meaning, "My soul hangeth upon Thee; Thy right Hand hath upholden me."³

In another passage the Bride describes her union as anticipated, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His"⁴—He unites Himself to me, and I to Him—and in token that all union is of God's Grace drawing and kindling us, she cries out, "Draw me!" while, to prove that it is no inert mass or reluctant culprit that is to be drawn, but one ready to co-operate with all her powers, however feeble, she adds, "We will run after Thee."⁵ The Bridegroom draws one only, but many run after Him. God requires but the will, yet all the other faculties run after it to share its union with Him.

It was to such union that the Bridegroom stimulated His beloved Sulamite: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."⁶ When we want to make the impression of a seal upon wax, we are not content with merely joining the two; we press them forcibly together. And in like manner

¹ Cant. vii. 10.² Cant. i. 13.³ Ps. lxiii. 9.⁴ Cant. ii. 16.⁵ Cant. i. 4.⁶ Cant. viii. 6.

He would have us united to Him so closely and urgently as to bear the impress of His Likeness: "The Love of Christ constraineth us."¹ O marvellous illustration of the highest union! He had joined Himself to human nature by grace, as a vine to the elm, thereby making it partaker of His fruit. But seeing that this union was defeated by Adam's sin, He contracted a yet closer, more urgent union through the Incarnation, by which human nature was for ever united to the Person of the Godhead. And in order that not human nature only, but each and all men, might be closely united to His Boundless Love, He instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, through which every one may partake and unite himself to his Lord by feeding on that Heavenly Food. Surely such a sacramental union must be the most powerful of stimulants towards that spiritual union of which we are treating.

CHAPTER III.

The Highest Degree of Union in Rapture.

BE the soul's union with God conscious or unconscious, He is alike its Author, and none can approach or attain Him "except the Father draw him:"² "Draw me, we will run after Thee."³ Now the perfection of this union lies in two points—purity and strength. If I approach any one in order to speak to him, to see him, to obtain somewhat of him, or lean upon him, I certainly draw near, but my main object is not so much union with him, as to promote whatever may be my immediate object. But if I approach with no other end in view than to enjoy his immediate presence, this is simply and purely to seek union with him.

There were many who drew near to our Lord thus:

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14.

² John vi. 44.

³ Cant. i. 4.

to hearken, like Mary ; to be healed, like the sick woman in the Gospel ; to worship, like the Magi ; to serve Him, like Martha ; to satisfy their doubts, like Thomas ; to anoint Him, like the Magdalene, Joseph, and Nicodemus. But the Bride seeks that she may find Him only ; and having found Him, she cares only to cleave to Him : " I held Him, and would not let Him go."¹ S. Bernard notices that whereas Jacob exclaimed, " I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me ! " the Bride, seeking rather the God of all blessings Himself than His actual blessings, would not let Him go however He might load her with blessings. " Whom have I in Heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. . . . Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."²

In such a mind it was that His Blessed Mother stood by His Cross seeking her Son, seeking to be near Him amid the saddest scenes, because it was Himself, not any mere delight in Him, that she craved.

When the union of the soul with God is very close and urgent, it is technically called inherency or adhesion, because the soul becomes so identified with God that it can scarce be separated from Him. Take the case of a man who is rapt by the spell of music, or even the mere gambler fascinated by his cards, and see how hard it is to tear him thence even for actual necessities ! And how much rather should the loving soul be rapt in its God, when permitted to approach His Divine Perfection ? Even so S. Paul said, " I am crucified with Christ that I might live unto God,"³ as also he affirmed that nothing, not even death itself, could separate him from his Master. Jonathan's soul, we read, " was knit with the soul of David,"⁴ and it was an axiom among the Fathers that friendship which could have an end is no real friendship.

Look upon the babe, how it clings to its mother

¹ Cant. iii. 4.

³ Gal. ii. 19, 20.

² Ps. lxxiii. 24, 25.

⁴ 1 Sam. xviii. 1.

when any one offers to take it away ! If one little hand is loosened, how the other grasps her ! How the child cries when removed ! how it calls for her till it sinks to sleep at last ! Just so the soul which is truly united to God can only be dragged loose with bitter force ; it will not let Him go. If the imagination be distracted it holds on with the understanding ; if that be disturbed the will still cleaves to Him ; and if even that be for a moment disturbed, it reverts eagerly to the Beloved, tightening its bonds more closely than ever, while realising the "strait betwixt two desires" of which S. Paul speaks to the Philippians ;¹ longing to leave all outward things and abide solely with Christ, yet also desiring to follow up the work of obedience which that very union inculcates.

S. Teresa says that when union with our Lord has reached this point it is the same as rapture or suspension of the faculties. It is called union or suspension when brief, ecstasy or rapture when prolonged ; and that because when the soul is so powerfully united to God as to be with difficulty separated, it lives no longer in self, but in God, as a crucified body hangs not on itself but on the cross, or as ivy becomes part of the wall on which it grows.

Love is a bond, "the bond of perfectness,"² and he who loves most is most closely bound to God. And by this I do not mean the habitual, permanent union which exists whether we sleep or wake, but of that active union which is the result and utterance of love. Suppose that S. Paul, S. Denys, S. Augustine, S. Bernard, S. Francis, S. Catherine, were once more on earth, but sleeping in very weariness after their great works for the love of God, while, on the other hand, you take some devout soul less holy than they, absorbed in unitive prayer : which is most closely united to God ? Surely those great Saints, for their love is greatest, and albeit their faculties slumber, they are more inseparably bound to Him. Do you ask

¹ Phil. i. 23.

² Col. iii. 14.

how a soul plunged in the extatic union of prayer can be less united than saints who sleep? I reply, that while it is foremost in the actual practice of union, they are foremost in a union already attained and perfected.

Such practice of union with God is greatly to be promoted by brief but frequent ejaculatory prayer: "Lord Jesus, grant me to be like-minded to Thee! Teach me to renounce all creature-bonds for Thee! Thou, O my God, art my All! Mighty Lover of souls, draw me wholly to Thyself! Thou art wholly mine; when shall I be wholly Thine! Be Thou the loadstone of my heart; draw me to Thyself for ever! I was made for Thee, wherefore have I not attained to Thee? Swallow up the drop which Thou hast created within the ocean of Thy Love! 'Draw me, and I will run after Thee;' I will cast myself into the arms of Thy Mercy, and abide there to all eternity!" Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the first Species of Rapture.

EXTASY is called rapture because by it God draws and raises us to Himself; and rapture is called extasy because it carries us forcibly out of ourselves and unites us to God. The attractions whereby God draws us are marvellously sweet; yet at the same time the power with which His Divine Beauty and Goodness act upon the soul is so intense, that it ravishes and carries it away, while the eagerness with which the raptured soul yields to His attractions causes it not merely to rise up, but to rush, so to say, out of itself into the Bosom of its God. There is a corresponding evil attraction whereby sin draws the soul from its rightful spiritual elevation through the lines of fleshly lusts; and such lusts so powerfully influence the mind and upset its balance,

that philosophers have likened the man who is subject to them to an epileptic patient, so utterly he is lost. O man, how long will ye degrade yourself to the level of brutes !

There are three manner of holy extasies : that of the understanding, which comes of illumination, and results in marvelling admiration ; that of the affections, which proceeds from fervour, and results in devotion ; and that of action, which results in practical operations. Admiration is kindled by the realisation of some hitherto unknown and unexpected truth ; and when that truth combines beauty and worth, admiration is intensified, as in the case of the Queen of Sheba on finding Solomon's grandeur so far beyond her expectations, or of the Jews when they were "astonished" at our Lord's Wisdom and His mighty Works.¹ And so when it pleases God to give the mind any special enlightenment, by which it attains an unusually exalted contemplation of the Divine Mysteries, it discovers unforeseen beauties therein, and is rapt in admiration.

Such admiration forcibly attaches the mind to the admired object, so that it is never weary of contemplation ; and sometimes God further gives the soul an ever-increasing perceptive light, by which, like those who search a gold-mine, the understanding continues to penetrate deeper and deeper in the knowledge of its Divine attraction. Such admiration has ever been the source and motive-power of philosophy and natural science, and it is not less so of mystic theology ; and inasmuch as this admiration, when strong, carries men out of themselves, and beyond their natural level in the consideration of heavenly things, it tends to produce extasy.

¹ Matt. xiii. 54.

CHAPTER V:

The second Kind of Rapture.

GOD draws minds to Himself by His sovereign Beauty and inconceivable Goodness, which combine to make One Supreme Divinity of Infinite Perfection. All creation is designed for goodness and beauty ; all things tend thereto. Goodness and beauty are desirable and attractive to all, and whatever has power to will or to act is influenced thereby. It is the property of beauty to attract and call all things to itself, and therefore the Greeks describe it by a word the root of which is *to call*.¹

So again the true symbol of good is light, the property of which is to absorb all things into itself ; wherefore in like manner the Greeks have a name for the sun which implies its power of ingathering and compressing. Even so goodness assimilates all with itself, being not merely sovereign unity, but supremely unifying, inasmuch as all things acknowledge and seek it as their beginning, preservation, and end. Practically, indeed, beauty and goodness are one and the same thing. Herein I am almost literally quoting S. Denys the Areopagite.

There is nothing created so beautiful or beneficent as the sun, which indeed is the accepted symbol of both beauty and goodness. Both of these compose its light, without which there were nothing either good or beautiful in our physical world. Its beauty lights up all things ; its goodness kindles and vivifies. By the first it attracts every mortal eye ; by the second it attracts all bodily appetites and inclinations. It affects all natural exhalations and productions ; all physical generation is influenced by the vital warmth of the sun.

¹ The Greek word "to call" is *καλέω*, and "beauty" is *τὸ καλόν*.

Even so God, the Father of Light, the Sovereign Good and Beauty, attracts man's understanding to contemplate Him by His Beauty, while His Goodness wins him to love. His Beauty, as it entrances the intellect, pours love into the will ; His Goodness, filling the will with love, kindles the understanding to contemplation. So love excites contemplation, and contemplation love. Thus it follows that extasy and rapture depend wholly upon love ; and we may fairly assert with S. Denys that Divine Love is extatic, and does not suffer those who are animated by it to belong to themselves, but solely to the Beloved. It was under the influence of this extatic love that S. Paul exclaimed, " I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He had gone forth from himself, so to say, into God, and lived a life which was not his own, but that of his Beloved.

This rapture affects the will thus : God touches it with His Sweetness, and then, as a needle touched by the magnet turns to the pole, so the will, attracted by the loadstone of Divine Love, is powerfully drawn, and sinks into a rapture, not of knowledge, but of joy ; not of admiration, but of affection ; not of theory, but of experience ; not of sight, but of fruition. At times, indeed, the understanding may be filled with admiration, beholding the holy delight which the will experiences, even as the will delights in the admiration which absorbs the understanding ; so that these two faculties sustain one another, the sight of beauty rousing love for it, while love causes men to gaze upon it. We do not feel the warmth of the sun without seeing its light, nor do we enjoy that light without feeling its warmth. Love renders admiration easy, and admiration facilitates love.

Nevertheless the extasy of the understanding and of the will are not so inevitably linked together but that one may often exist without the other. Heathen philosophers often attained much farther in knowledge

² Gal. ii. 20.

than in love, while good Christians often have more love than knowledge; whence we may fairly infer that fulness of knowledge does not necessarily produce an excess of love, while that excess of love is not necessarily accompanied by that of knowledge. Nor does a mere extasy of admiration make a man better. S. Paul, who had been "caught up" into Paradise, yet says, "If I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing;"¹ while the devil himself can bring about false extasy, and cause the intellect to be rapt through deceitful, carnal delusions. But that real extasy of the will, whereby it cleaves wholly and solely to God, can come only from the Holy Spirit, by Whom "the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."²

CHAPTER VI.

The Signs of True Rapture, and the third Kind thereof.

EVEN in our own time there have been people who honestly believed themselves, and were believed by others, to be subject to extasy, and who yet proved to be under mere delusions of the devil. There was a priest in S. Augustine's time who could throw himself into extasy when he would, and who, when in that state, was insensible even to fire, and his respiration was arrested; and philosophers say that there are certain natural forms of extasy, the result of excessive application of the mind. So we need not marvel if the Evil One, seeking to deceive souls, should "transform himself into an angel of light,"³ and produce false rapture in frail, ignorant people. Theologians have given rules whereby to distinguish real and unreal extasies. Two signs of that which is real will suffice our purpose. The first is, that extasy which

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

² Rom. v. 5.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

is of God affects the will more than the intellect, so that where we find more light than warmth, more speculation than affection, we should be suspicious. Doubtless there may be even prophetic vision without charity, as there may be intense love without rapture or vision; but wherever there is mere light without a will to love, we may fear that there is more of that which "puffeth up than that which edifieth," and that its subject is, like Saul, Balaam, and Caiphas, "among the prophets,"¹ yet numbered with the reprobate.

The second sign of a true extasy is to be found in its action upon the life, the extasy of a holy, pure living. Human nature is not capable of a perfect performance of all God's Commandments, but it is in accordance with the light of reason, so that when living up to His Commandments we are not in opposition to our natural inclination. But beyond these there are counsels of perfection in order to which not only we need God's uplifting Grace, but also that He lift us above our natural instincts and inclinations; because although these are not contrary to our human reason, they go beyond it. And therefore, when a man leads not merely a respectable, honest, Christian life, but a life which is supernatural, spiritual, and wholly devout, that life is extatic, *i.e.* one altogether without and above his natural condition.

Man's natural reason bids him live without stealing, lying, or impurity; it bids him honour his parents, worship God, and the like. But to renounce worldly goods for the sake of poverty, to rejoice in shame, contempt, persecution, and martyrdom; to embrace absolute continency, and to live in the world a life diametrically opposed to all its precepts and maxims, a life of self-renunciation and abnegation,—this is not human, but superhuman. He who lives thus lives not in himself, but without and above himself. And inasmuch as no one can rise thus beyond himself "except the Father draw him," such a life becomes

¹ 1 Sam. x. 11.

practically a perpetual rapture, a continuous ecstasy in act.

"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," S. Paul says to the Colossians.¹ Death separates the soul from the body and its trammels, and so speaking the Apostle seems to say, "Ye live no more in yourselves, or in your natural state ; your soul has risen above itself." The phoenix is said to extinguish its own life in the sun's burning rays, that it may rise from out the ashes to a better and more vigorous life ; the silkworm turns into a butterfly ; the bee begins its existence as a grub. And so it is with the spiritual life. We leave our mere earthly life for another of a higher stamp, "hiding" this new life "with Christ in God," Who alone sees, knows, and confers it. Our new life is Divine Love vivifying and kindling the soul, and this love is "hidden in God with Christ." We read in the Gospel that our Lord as He ascended suffered His disciples to see Him at first, until "a cloud received Him out of their sight." Since that He is hidden in Heaven in God, and since He is our Love, and love is the soul's life, our life too is "hidden with Christ in God ;" and so "when Christ, Who is our Life, shall appear" at the last Great Day, we too "shall appear with Him in glory,"² for He Who is our Love will glorify us in His Own splendour and beatitude.

CHAPTER VII.

Love is the Soul's Life.

THE soul is the motive-power of all man's vital movements ; Aristotle says that it is the principle by which we live, feel, and understand. Hence it follows that these movements in their diversity are the expression of our various kinds of life, and where there is no natural movement there is no life. So love

¹ Col. iii. 3.

² Col. iii. 4.

is the motive-power of that spiritual life by which we live, move, and feel; and our spiritual life will be whatever the movements of our affections are. A heart without movement and affection has no love, and no heart that loves can be devoid of affective movements. Therefore when we fix our love on Jesus Christ we have anchored our spiritual life in Him. But He is now hid in God above, as God was hid in Him on earth; and therefore our life is hid in Him, and when He shall appear in glory our life and love will appear with Him in God.

S. Ignatius expressed this when he said, "My love is crucified;" as though he said, "That natural earthly love, and all the passions appertaining thereto, hangs on the Cross. I gave it up to death because it was mortal. But as my Saviour gave up His mortal life to rise to Life Immortal, so, dying spiritually with Him in that which was the natural life of my soul, I rise to the supernatural life of a heavenly and immortal love."

Whenever, then, we see any one given to extasies and raptures in prayer who nevertheless has no extasy of life—that is, no supernatural renunciation of worldly desires, no mortification of the will by interior gentleness, humility, and specially charity—then we may be sure that such raptures are very questionable; they may dazzle men, but they will not cause sanctification. What does a soul gain by being rapt in prayer, if in daily life and conversation it be absorbed in low, earthly affections? To be above one's natural level in prayer, and beneath it in life and act; to be angelic in meditation and earthly in conversation, is to "halt between two opinions,"¹ and is a sure sign that the Evil One is deluding his victim. Happy they who live a supernatural life, raised, rapt above their mere earthly selves, although they be not gifted with raptures in prayer! There is many a saint in Heaven who never experienced such a rapture, many a martyr who was content with ordinary devotion and fervour;

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 21.

but there was never yet a saint whose life did not undergo the extasy and rapture of which I speak in the shape of rising above self and natural inclination.

S. Paul explains this still further when he tells the Romans that "our old man is crucified with Christ," that "we be dead unto sin" with Him, and raised with Him "to walk in newness of life, that henceforth we should not serve sin."¹ Herein it seems that we each have two beings and two lives—the old man, whose life is old, the new man, whose life is new; even as the eagle, which loses its power of flight as its wings grow old, until such time as, shaking the old feathers off into the sea, it takes new wing on its freshly-grown pinions. Our first life, then, we live after the old man; with the faults, frailties and infirmities inherited from Adam, and through his sin our life is subject unto death. But in the second life we live after the new man; according to the grace, favour, and mercy of our Saviour, a life of salvation and redemption, a life essentially vital and vivid. But whoever would attain to this new life must pass to it through the death of the old man "crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts,"² burying them beneath the waters of Holy Baptism and in penitence, even as Naaman went down into the waters of Jordan to cast off his old leprous life, and received a new pure life. He was no longer the old Naaman, but a new man, dead to his leprosy, alive to health and purity; and whosoever is raised to this new Christ-like life lives no more to himself, nor for nor in himself, but to his Saviour, in and for his Saviour. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."³

¹ Rom. vi.

² Gal. v. 24.

³ Rom. vi. 11.

CHAPTER VIII.

B. Paul on the Ecstatic Superhuman Life.

NO one has ever used such earnest and convincing arguments on behalf of this supernatural life, wherein all action becomes raised, so to say, to ecstasy, as S. Paul. Kindled, rapt with love to his Master, he says, and we each must learn to say, "The Love of Christ constraineth us."¹ Nothing so forcibly affects man's heart as love. We are eager to love those that love us, but when it is a question of the humble returning the love of the great, or a subject that of his king, the urgency is tenfold. If, then, we consider that Jesus Christ, the Eternal, All-powerful God, loved us unto the death, even the death of the Cross, is not this a "constraining" cause of love, and of a love as urgent as it is tender? But what is it in our Dear Lord that constrains us thus? "The Love of Christ constraineth us," His Apostle says, "because we thus judge;" *i.e.* His Love is urgent when we consider, weigh, and ponder the greatness of what He has done for us. And what is it that we are so to consider? See how gradually S. Paul leads us on: "That if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all."² The process is perfect: if One, even Christ, died for all, then are all dead in the Person of that Saviour Who died for them, and the merits of His Death are justly imputed to them, inasmuch as He underwent it on their behalf.

What follows? Hear S. Paul again. It follows "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again." What more forcible argument were possible? Jesus Christ died for us; He gave us life through His Death, and we live only by reason of His

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14.² 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Death, because He died for us, to us, and in us. Therefore our life is no longer ours ; no longer in us, but in Him ; no longer for ourselves, but for Him.

There was once a maiden of Sestos who had fondly raised a young eagle, the which, as it grew strong of wing and followed its natural instincts of pursuit, never failed to bring its prey in grateful fealty to its mistress. At length it so fell out that the maiden died, and according to the wont of her land she was laid upon a funeral pile to be burned ; when, just as the flames were kindling, the poor bird came hovering over the pile, and, terror-struck, dropped its prey and lighted on the body of its beloved mistress, striving to shield her with its wings from the fire. And so great was the power of its love, that even those fierce flames could not drive it away, but cleaving closer to the body of her it loved, the noble bird became the victim of its unconquerable gratitude and love.

Can we not read our own history in this ? Our Dear Lord brought us up from infancy ; He bore and fashioned us, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. He made us His Own by Baptism, and has fed us, body and soul, with His Body and Blood through His unutterable Love, while that we might live He endured death for us. What, indeed, can we say, but that we which live should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him Who died for us ; that we should dedicate every moment, every desire, every thought and act, every power and impulse of our soul to Him and His Love. Behold that Divine Redeemer stretched upon the Cross as on a funeral pile, dying for love of us, of a love stronger than death, a death more full of love than we can conceive. Why cannot we too cast ourselves upon that Cross and die with Him, consumed in the flames of His Love like the eagle of that Greek story ? " My Beloved is mine, and I am His ; " I will live and die in His Bosom. " Neither death nor life shall be able to separate me from Him." Surely this is the true extasy of love, when a man has learnt to live no

/ longer after the things and fashions of this world, but above them, solely after the inspirations and leading of the Blessed Saviour of souls.

CHAPTER IX.

The Supreme Effort of Love is the Death of those who love.

LOVE is strong as death."¹ Death severs the soul from the body, and from all earthly bonds ; so heavenly love severs the soul of the lover from all that is earthly and sensual. The only difference is that in the one case the severance is visible, in the other it is spiritual ; though, indeed, sacred love has been known so intense as to cause a blessed and precious death to saints.

Just as it is the lot of the reprobate to die in sin, so is it that of God's elect to die in His Love and Grace. The faithful never die suddenly, for death can never be unforeseen to him who has steadily pursued his Christian course to the end ; but he may die by a sudden death, and therefore the Church in her Litanies teaches us to ask, not merely to be delivered from "sudden" death, but from a "sudden and unprepared death."²

Had mere worldly men beheld the fire from heaven fall upon and consume S. Simeon Stylites, they would doubtless have imagined it to be in judgment rather than the final scene of his life's consecration, as the Abbot Julian, though at a distance, saw it in a vision to be. S. Homobonus of Cremona, kneeling in deep

¹ Cant. viii. 6.

² Unfortunately the English version of the Litany in our Prayer Book has lost this very beautiful and significant shape. We only say, "From sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us ;" but the original Litany has it as S. Francis says—

"A subitanea et improvisa morte,
Libera nos, Domine."

devotion at Mass, rose not, as is wont, at the Gospel, and it was only thus that the bystanders found him to be dead. Many holy people have died in Church or in the Confessional, or as they left the pulpit where they had been preaching God's Word; others die of apoplexy, in coma, in delirium, or with the loss of reason, or sundry other kinds of death, which are indeed materially sudden, but not spiritually unforeseen. These all died in God's Grace, even though unable to think of Him as they passed hence, and that you will readily see, with a moment's reflection. For consider: wise men do not lose their knowledge when they sleep, else were they fain to begin anew each time they wake; so habitual prudence, temperance, faith, hope, love, are ever present in the good man's heart, albeit not always active. When a man sleeps all his wonted habits sleep with him, waking when he wakes; and even so when the good man meets with death in a sudden form, be it accidental or other, he may not die in the external practice of Divine Love, but he none the less dies in God's Love, as the Wise Man saith, "Though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest,"¹ for the means to eternal life is, that death find a man living in habitual love and charity.

Other saints, again, have died, not only in such habitual frame, but in its active exercise; as S. Augustine, who died making an act of contrition, which is love; S. Jerome, exhorting his spiritual children to love and holiness; S. Ambrose, in sweet converse with His Lord, Whom he had just received in the Blessed Sacrament; S. Anthony, singing the Magnificat; S. Thomas Aquinas, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, fervently uttering that passage of the Canticles (the last on which he had preached), "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field."² The

¹ Vulgate: "Justus autem si morte præoccupatus fuerit, in refrigerio erit" (Wisd. iv. 7).

² Cant. vii. 11.

Apostles and many martyrs died in prayer; the Venerable Bede, to whom the season of his death was revealed (it was vespertide on the Festival of the Ascension), went into Choir, and, standing in his stall, ended his life together with the vesper psalm, following his Master to that endless morning where no shadows fall. Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, of whom Sixtus of Sienna says it is hard to say whether his wisdom or his saintliness were most remarkable, commented upon the fifty properties of Divine Love set forth in the Canticles, and three days after died, without seeming ill, ejaculating, "Thy Love is strong as death."

S. Martin died rapt in prayer; S. Louis, that saintliest of kings, struck down with pestilence, ceased not to pray, until, having received the Viaticum, he stretched forth his arms as if on the cross, and expired breathing forth the trustful words, "As for me, I will come unto Thine house, and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple."¹ S. Peter Celestinus, after enduring untold trials, met his end singing like a dying swan the glorious strain, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!" S. Eusebia (surnamed the Stranger) died kneeling in fervent prayer; S. Peter Martyr, writing his confession of faith with his own blood, and saying, "Lord, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit;" and S. Francis Xavier, the great Apostle of the Indies, breathed his last embracing the Crucifix, and bursting forth in fervent cries of "O Jesus, God of my heart!"

¹ Ps. v. 7.

CHAPTER X.

Of those who have died of Love, and for Divine Love.

ALL the martyrs died for God's Love—not for a dead, but for a living faith, which comes of love—and their confession of faith was more an act of love than of the intellect. When S. Peter denied his Lord, on Whom he believed nevertheless in his heart, he let go his hold of love. But there have been martyrs who died for charity alone, as S. John Baptist, who was a martyr to his boldness in rebuking vice, or S. Peter and S. Paul. S. Stanislaus and S. Thomas of Canterbury were martyrs of love rather than faith, and many holy virgins were put to death through their persistent adherence to their Divine Bridegroom.

Again, there are souls which give themselves up so wholly to Divine Love that it seems to consume them; they forget to eat and drink in their sorrow at seeing God offended, and worldly men think that they die of sorrow, whereas it is really that the fire of heavenly love devours their vital force, so that death ensues. Surely this is a blessed death! How sweet the incurable wound of sacred love, which is ever loosening the weary strings of earthly life! By such a beautiful death S. Catherine of Sienna, S. Stanislas Kotzka, S. Charles, and many others, passed hence in their youth. S. Francis, after he had received the stigmata, became more an image of death than a living, breathing man.

CHAPTER XI.

Of some who died solely of Love.

THUS all the elect die in habitual love, and some in, some for, some through such love. But there is a yet higher degree by which some there are who die of love, not merely as wounded or languishing, but pierced, transfixed, and done to instant death by love. The soul, forcibly attracted by the sweetness of its Beloved, rushes towards Him with such impetus that the body, being unable to follow, is left behind, while the immaterial part speeds its way like a dove to the Bosom of its Lord. He draws it irresistibly to Himself; and as a man "leaves father and mother to cleave to his wife," so the pure Bride of Christ forsakes the flesh to cleave to Him. But so powerful an effort can only there be made where all earthly, carnal affections have been very thoroughly stripped off already, and the refining fire of love has purged the heart of all passion and self-will, so that at last the soul is meet for a death so precious in the sight of the Lord, an entrance into eternal glory.

S. Francis, our very ideal of heavenly love, did not merely die through the exhaustion of the mighty love with which God filled his heart; he was raised up as a very miracle of love to die, not only for love, but of love. As his last moments drew on he caused himself to be laid naked on the ground, and then, receiving a covering as alms, he addressed his brethren on the love and fear of God, and zeal for the Church, bade them read the Passion to him, and then fervently repeated the 142nd Psalm: "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; yea, even unto the Lord did I make my supplication," till, having uttered the last verse: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may

give thanks unto Thy Name," he expired, in the forty-fifth year of his age.

S. Magdalene lived for thirty years in a cave in Provence (yet to be seen), in continual raptures and visions of angels, until one Sunday her dear friend the Bishop S. Maximin, finding her in church fixed in contemplation, her hands uplifted and her eyes full of tears, he communicated her, and she forthwith yielded up her saintly spirit, which speeded to dwell for ever at the Feet of that Lord Whom she had chosen as the "better part" even on earth.

S. Basil had a certain dear friend, a Jewish physician, whom he greatly desired to convert, but never could succeed; until at last, worn out with labours and austerities, he lay at the point of death, when, asking the physician how long he had to live, this friend replied that he must certainly die ere sunset. "What would you say," the sick man asked, "were I to be still alive to-morrow?" "I would become a Christian," was the answer. Whereupon S. Basil pleaded earnestly with God, and obtained the prolongation of his life and the conversion of his friend; so that S. Basil rose up, and going to church, baptised the Jew and all his household, and then, returning to his bed, he communed long with God, piously exhorted those around, and at length, beholding the angels awaiting him, softly said, "My God, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit," and died. Then the convert, embracing him with tears, exclaimed, "O great Basil, thou servant of God, if thou hadst asked it, neither wouldest thou have died to-day!"

S. Teresa made it known after her death that it was caused by so vehement an outburst of love, that, overpowering all natural limits, her soul fled away to the Beloved of her heart.

CHAPTER XII.

**The History of one who died of Love on Mount
Olivet.**

I HAVE heard a tale, which, albeit marvellous, is not incredible to those who love, the rather that, as S. Paul says, "charity believeth all things," *i.e.* is not ready to suppose other men false; and where testimony seems good, charity is wont to believe, especially where God's Love to men, or theirs to Him, is concerned. All the more because Charity, the queen of virtue, delights in all that confirms her empire.

S. Augustine says that the most glorious miracles are often scarce known, even on the spot; but they need not the less be true, nor need the devout soul stumble at what seems hard to believe.

This story, then, as told by S. Bernardin of Sienna, is as follows. A certain nobleman of devout life went to Palestine to visit the Holy Places, and after due confession and communion he reached Nazareth, the scene of the Annunciation, where he meditated the mystery of God's redeeming Grace. Thence he passed to Bethlehem, where he kissed the sacred ground whereon the Saviour of the world was born; and coming to the Jordan, he too plunged into the waters wherein his Lord was baptised. Thence he went into the desert, where his devout imagination vividly depicted the Temptation, and the angels ministering to their Lord when He had overcome Satan. The scene of the Transfiguration, that of the Upper Chamber where the Holy Eucharist was instituted, the brook Kedron, the Garden of Gethsemane, and all the successive scenes of the Passion, he devoutly traced, realising with inconceivable earnestness each step, and shedding an ocean of tears on the soil watered by

his Saviour's Blood. From the Sepulchre he went to Emmaus ; and finally, coming to Mount Olivet, and following in thought as in scene the marvellous Ascension of the Lord, this devout Christian gathered himself together as an archer draws his bow, and lifting hands and eyes to heaven, exclaimed, " O most Dear Lord, I know not how any further to follow Thee on earth ; grant me then, Dearest Saviour, to follow Thee in Heaven ! " having said which, he discharged his soul thitherwards, even as the arrow speeds from the well-strung bow.

Those around him were greatly marvelling, when the physician summoned, after due inquiry as to his temperament and habits, pronounced that his heart had burst from excess of fervour and love ; and opening his body, truly they found it so, and on that noble heart were written the words, " Jesus, my Love." Love had taken death's office, and parted body and soul asunder.

Another author, whose name we know not, records, in a book called the " Spiritual Mirror," how a certain noble of Provence, a very pious man, and of a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, was taken very ill, and by reason of continual sickness was unable to receive Holy Communion. He, longing greatly for It, besought the Priest to lay the Blessed Sacrament on his breast, which being done, that loving breast opened and swallowed up the Beloved One, and at the same instant life departed.

I grant that this is a very marvellous story, and one that needs strong testimony, but after the well-known and verified history of S. Clara of Monfalcone, and of the stigmata of S. Francis, I can find no difficulty in believing any wonders of Divine Love.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Blessed Virgin-Mother died of Love for her Son.

WE cannot doubt but that S. Joseph died before the Passion, or our Lord would scarce have committed His Mother to S. John. Neither can we doubt but that he was ministered to in his last hours by his beloved foster-Son. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." What love and tenderness S. Joseph had borne to the Divine Babe, and who can question but that it was restored to him a hundredfold at the end? Who does not remember the beautiful type of filial and parental love which we see in the stork, the parent birds being carried in their old age, even as they had borne their young while in the fulness of strength? How often had S. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin carried the Infant Saviour in their arms, as they journeyed in this world; and surely He in His turn bore His foster-father to Abraham's bosom, and thence to His Own ascended Glory? So loving a saint could scarce die save of love; and having completed the task assigned him, we can but fancy him saying in the Saviour's Own words, "Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do," and then committing his spirit into the Hands of Jesus, even as the infant form of that same Jesus had been committed into his hands when born.

Such can hardly fail to have been somewhat the manner of departure of that holy man to whom were trusted the most loving and familiar offices towards Jesus that any, save His Blessed Mother, were permitted to render. Nor can we imagine her to have died any other death than that of love, the noblest death, and therefore the most fit end for the noblest life ever created, a death which angels might crave

could they die. Surely if the early Christians loved each other so well that they "were of one heart and one soul,"¹ and if S. Paul no longer himself lived, but Jesus Christ lived in him, through the closeness of union whereby his heart was knit to his Redeemer's heart, how much more must the Holy Virgin and her Son have had but one heart and one soul and one life? so that that Blessed Mother lived not herself, but her Son lived in her, loving and loved beyond all that is of men or angels, even as the love of a mother and her only son is chiefest among earthly loves. And this was the love of a Mother unlike all other mothers, inasmuch as no earthly father had part in the birth of her Divine Son, and therefore their union was of a sort different to all else. Not even the Chiefest Seraphim could say, "Thou art my Son, and as my true Son I love Thee;" neither to any other in creation could the Lord say, "Thou art My Mother, and I am indeed thy Son." If then a loving servant might dare to say that he lived not, but his Master in him, how much more might that Mother say, "I have no life save in my Son; truly He liveth in me"!

And if this Mother lived in her Son's Life, surely she died in His Death. We are told that the phoenix, growing old, gathers together on a mountain-top a pile of aromatic wood, and when the sun's rays are at the hottest, it beats its wings thereon until the wood kindles, and the bird is consumed amid the flames. Even so that Virgin Mother, having with tender memory gathered and pondered all the mysteries of her Son's Life and Death, and receiving the brightest rays which He the Sun of Righteousness ever sheds upon any created in His Love, fanning such flames with the breeze of her devout contemplation, surely at length Heavenly Love must have consumed her as a living sacrifice, and she must have rendered up her soul into her Son's Arms. O blessed, lifegiving death! O holy love, which through death leads to life!

¹ Acts iv. 32.

There were other loving souls watching the Lord's Death, whereof the most loving felt the keenest pangs ; for their love was steeped in sorrow, and sorrow in love, and they who loved their Saviour best entered most deeply into His Passion. But His Blessed Mother, who loved more than all, was beyond all pierced with a sharp sword.¹ The sorrows of the Son pierced the Mother's heart, so joined as they were together ; yet that Mother's heart sought no cure, but rather cherished the wound, desiring only to depart as He had departed, He Who, as Holy Scripture tells us, died once a perfect Sacrifice of love for the sins of the whole world.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Blessed Virgin must have died a Loving, Peaceful Death.

THERE is a tradition that Our Lady revealed to S. Matilda that her death was caused by a violent access of Divine Love ; but both S. Bridget and S. John Damascene testified that she died a most peaceful death. I believe both assertions to be true.

The beauty of the stars is wondrous, and most grateful to our eyes ; but they seem to shine with a varying, twinkling light, either from the nature of that light, or from the distance intervening between them and us. Even so those saints who died of love passed through many strange vicissitudes, owing to the frailty of their as yet unperfected love, which was unequal to a steady persistence. But it was not so with the Blessed Virgin. Just as we see the sun rise, not by starts, but by a steady progress, so that we are scarce conscious of its motion until it is wholly risen ; so heavenly love grew continually in her pure soul, calmly, steadily, without commotion or disturbance.

¹ Luke ii. 35.

We may not imagine any impetuous agitation in her love, for it is the very nature of love to be gentle, calm, and peaceful, and when it works by the opposite means it is owing to resistance made. But where all the soul's avenues are freely open to it, love advances peacefully and rapidly. Thus holy love worked calmly and without effort in the Virgin Mother's heart, for assuredly it met with no resistance there.

A mighty river dashes noisily against the rocks which stem it, but rolls smoothly through the plain ; even so Divine Love, when it meets with hindrance and resistance (such as, indeed, in some shape or at some time all men offer to it), becomes vehement, struggles with evil tendencies, and constrains the will after divers fashions, in order to overrule obstacles, and make way for itself.

But everything within the Blessed Virgin seconded the views of Divine Love, which grew in her far more than in any other creature, albeit quietly and gently. Intensely as she loved and suffered beneath the Cross, she did not die there ; for, greatly as she felt both grief and love, there was such mingled power and sweetness, such energy and such peace combined, as sustained her through all.

Not but that the soul of the Blessed Virgin, like that of all men, had two parts, and consequently two appetites or desires, one rational and superior, the other sensual and inferior, so that she experienced those natural repugnances and contradictions which exist between the two. Such a struggle our Lord Himself vouchsafed to take on Him with humanity. But all her affections were so regulated that Divine Love held sway within her easily, the repugnances and appetites of nature never developing into sin, not even into venial sin. All such impulses were faithfully used on behalf of Divine Love by promoting the practice of those virtues which can only be attained amid difficulties, hindrance, and contradiction.

We are apt to think that thorns spoil our flowers,

and that the world do better without them. S. Ambrose says that but for sin there had been none. But since thorns there are and must be, the wise husbandman utilises them, and converts them into a hedge and shelter for his flocks and fields. Just so the Blessed Virgin, having her part in human infirmities, utilised them to the increase of many virtues, courage, temperance, justice, prudence, humility, and the like; so that, far from proving a hindrance, they forwarded her progress, till she combined Mary's loving contemplation with Martha's ardent activity. She had chosen the love of her Son, and nothing could take that from her.

The magnet has a hidden power to attract iron, yet there are five hindrances which hinder this attraction : (1) Too great distance between the parts ; (2) the intervention of a diamond ; (3) the presence of grease upon the iron ; (4) or if it be rubbed with garlic ; (5) if the iron be too heavy. In like manner the heart of man is made for God, Who attracts it continually by the power of His Divine Love. But there are five hindrances to His holy attraction : (1) Sin, which separates us from God ; (2) the love of riches ; (3) sensual pleasure ; (4) pride and vanity ; (5) self-love, with its crowd of unruly passions, which overwhelm us as a heavy burden.

Now none of these hindrances beset the Blessed Virgin, who was kept from sin, whose poverty was heartfelt, who was pure and humble, who had all her passions under control, and was free from the rebellion of self against God. Therefore, just as iron, when free from all hindrance or excessive weight, is drawn irresistibly by the loadstone, the attraction becoming increasingly powerful in proportion as the two substances are relatively near ; so the Holy Mother, being free from all hindrance between her and her Son's Divine Love, was united to Him in an ineffable union, sweet and pure, taking shape in external act, yet without checking the inward unity. There-

fore her death was gentle beyond all idea, her Son "drawing her by the savour of His good ointment,"¹ and she flowing gently into the Bosom of His endless Love. And albeit that sweet soul greatly loved her own most holy and pure body ; yet did she leave it without reluctance, like to Judith when she laid aside the cherished garments of her widowhood to go forth victorious over Holofernes ; or like Jonathan, when for love of David he stripped off his raiment. Love had laid the supreme pangs of death upon that blessed one beneath the Cross ; surely it was but fair that at last death should restore her the supremest bliss of love.

¹ Cant. i. 3.

BOOK VIII.

*THE LOVE OF CONFORMITY, BY WHICH WE
UNITE OUR WILL TO THAT OF GOD, AS
SIGNIFIED TO US BY HIS COMMANDMENTS,
COUNSELS, AND INSPIRATIONS.*

CHAPTER I.

*The Love of Conformity springs from Holy
Complacency.*

AS the good ground wherein the seed falls renders a hundredfold in its season, so the heart which delights in God cannot but seek to be the cause of delight or complacency to Him in return. We always desire to please those who please us. New wine seems cooling as we drink it, but so soon as it is heated by the internal juices with which it mingles, it heats the body, and the more warmth it derives therefrom so much the more it gives in return. True love is never ungrateful; it strives to please those in whom it takes delight, and hence arises that loving conformity which makes men grow like those they love. The great and wise Solomon became an idolater when he gave up his heart to idolatrous women, and Holy Scripture calls those men effeminate who yield themselves up unduly to the love of women, as thereby losing their manly mind and character. And just such a transformation insensibly takes place in the heart, complacency begetting complacency towards those who inspire us with it.

There is an Indian legend which tells of a little land animal which so affects the company of fish, that it

swims about with them in the sea, until at length it turns into a fish, and remains there. And so by dint of delight in God man becomes conformed to Him, and his will is transformed into that of God by reason of the pleasure he takes therein. Love either finds or makes a resemblance, says S. Chrysostom. The example of those we love has a quiet and imperceptible empire over us ; we cannot choose but imitate them. If a man be attracted by the scents of a perfumery, he will carry forth that sweetness when he departs, and spread it abroad wheresoever he goes. And in proportion as the heart delights in any one it imbibes his characteristics, for pleasure expands the heart just as sadness withers it ; and thus we often read in Holy Scripture of the heart being "enlarged" as synonymous with rejoicing. And when the heart is enlarged by pleasure, it is easily impressed with those characteristics which please, though, verily, other and less happy images will also press in, like to him who went to the marriage-feast without having on a wedding garment. Thus Aristotle's disciples affected his stammer, and Plato's followers imitated his stoop. Briefly, admiration is a great copyist, and therefore complacent love transforms us into the likeness of the God Whom we love, and that the more largely as we love Him more. So saints who greatly loved have been speedily and wholly transformed into His Likeness.

It is a striking and beautiful fact that if two lutes in perfect union are laid side by side, and one be touched, the strings of the other will vibrate in harmony. We shrink from imitating those whom we dislike, even in that which of itself is good ; and the Lacedemonians refused to follow the good counsels of a bad man until they had been repeated by some worthy. But we cannot help seeking conformity with those we love. It is in this sense, probably, that S. Paul says that "the law is not made for a righteous man,"¹ since the righteous is not righteous save in

¹ 1 Tim. i. 9.

that he is moved by holy love ; and if he loves, he needs not the pressure of the law, for love is the most urgent of all advocates on behalf of the will and intentions of Him Who is loved. Love is a ruler who needs no officers, no force ; its power lies in that, finding all our delight in God, we would fain please Him likewise. Love is an epitome of all theology which, without books or teachers, indoctrinates the ignorance of a Paul, an Antony, a Hilarion, a Simon, a Francis. In virtue of it the soul dares to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His : my soul feeds on the delight with which He inspires me, and He in return feeds upon my love for Him." Rest assured that whoever really delights in God desires heartily to please Him, and to be conformed to His Likeness.

CHAPTER II.

The Conformity of Submission proceeding from the Love of Benevolence.

WE have seen how complacent love endues us with such likeness to Divine Perfection as we are able to receive, even as a mirror which reflects the sunshine, not according to the brilliancy or vastness of that orb, but according to its own length and breadth. But further, we attain this holy conformity in another way, through the love of benevolence. Complacent love draws God into our heart, but the love of benevolence casts our heart into God, and therewith all our actions and affections, dedicating them wholly to Him, for benevolence craves to render God all possible honour, glory, and gratitude, as the rightful meed of His Goodness. Now this desire is fulfilled according to the strength of our complacent love, *e.g.* we have greatly rejoiced in beholding the Goodness of God ; and therefore we desire through the love of benevolence that all possible love may be

devoted to the adoration of that Goodness. We have marvelled at the sovereign Perfection of God; consequently we would have Him praised, honoured, and worshipped above all else. We have found gladness in the thought that He is not only our First Cause but our Final End, the Maker and Preserver of all; and therefore we would have all things subject to Him in absolute obedience. We see that His Will is perfect, just and true above all things; therefore we would that it be the ruler and guide of all human wills.

Bear in mind, however, that I am not now speaking of the obedience we owe to God as our Lord and Master, our Father and Benefactor; such obedience comes of right, not of love. But were there neither Paradise nor hell before man, and were he under no manner of obligation to God (which are, of course, impossible suppositions), still the love of benevolence would move us voluntarily to offer Him all obedience, from a keen sense of love for His sovereign Goodness and pure and holy Will.

In the relations of this world we continually see women voluntarily giving themselves up to the power of a husband out of free love, and men engaging in the service of some prince, or submitting to the rule of some superior; and we do the like when, by reason of the holy love of benevolence, we place all our affections in God's Hand, to be shaped and directed according to His Good Pleasure. And the highest point of love's obedience is when it needs no stimulant of fear or reward, no rule or law, but when it forestalls all these, submitting to God solely by reason of His perfect Goodness, which has a right to enfold and absorb all other wills within the gulf of His most perfect Will.

CHAPTER III.

How to conform to God's Will when it is signified to us.

ONE while we consider God's Will as in itself altogether holy and excellent, and it seems easy to praise, bless, and worship it, offering our own and all created wills to obey it in the petition "Thy Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." Or again, we consider it in its individual aspect, as in the events of our own life ; and lastly, we consider it as manifested in His declared plans and intentions. For though God's Divine Majesty knows but one simple Will, we in our weakness are constrained to class and name it variously in its effects.

Christian doctrine sets before us plainly the truths which God requires us to believe, the good He wills us to hope, the evil He wills us to fear, the things He would have us fear or desire, the commandments He wills us to keep, the counsels to be followed ; and all these combined make what we call God's signified Will, because He has signified and manifested that He intends these things to be believed and done. Now this signified Will being set before us as what He wishes rather than by peremptory constraint, we are free to follow His Will obediently, or to resist it by disobedience. There are three distinct acts of God's Will that apply to this ; namely, He wills us to have the power to resist, He wishes us not to resist, and yet He suffers our resistance if we will have it so. The power to resist is part of our natural liberty ; if we do resist, it comes of our own malice, but that we should not resist is what God would have of us. When we do resist God has no share in our disobedience, but leaving us to our free-will ("in the hand of His counsel, if he will, to keep the command-

ments")¹ He permits us to choose it. But when we obey, then He furthers us with His helping Grace.

Mere permission is a sterile passive action on God's part; but when He desires, it is an active fertile action which moves and stimulates. So that, desiring us to obey His signified Will, God intreats, exhorts, inspires, urges, pleads with us; but when He suffers us to resist, He merely leaves us to exercise our free-will, contrary to His desire and intention. Verily, His desire is most earnest; for what can be a warmer expression of it than our Lord's parable of the king who made a great supper, and not only invited and pressed, but constrained his guests to come and eat? What more could the master of the feast do, save force the food down their throats? and such favours are offered with affection, pleading, and remonstrance, not with violence. So with God's signified Will. He heartily desires us to do what He ordains, and He supplies us with whatever is needful to that end, urging us to make use thereof; what more could we ask? But even as the sun's rays are not extinguished because they are rejected and shut out, so God's signified Will does not cease to be His true Will even when it is resisted, and fails to produce the result it would do with co-operation.

Hearty conformity with God's Will consists in will, ing whatsoever He has signified to be His intention—believing His doctrines, trusting in His promises, fearing His displeasure, loving and living according to His commands and warnings; and all this we continually pledge ourselves to in the various offices of the Church. Thus we stand when the Gospel is read, in token of our obedience to God's Will as contained therein; and we kiss the Book at the open Gospel, in token that we adore His Holy Word. So saints of old have carried the Gospel in their bosom, as we read of S. Cecilia; and the Gospel of S. Matthew was found next S. Barnabas' heart, written with his own hand.

¹ Eccclus. xv. 14.

In the Councils of early times there was a custom of placing a throne in the midst of the assembled Bishops, and upon it the Book of the Gospels, as representing our Saviour, the King, Teacher, and Inspirer of the whole Church. And that noble type of the episcopal office, S. Carlo Borromeo, always studied Holy Scripture on his knees, in token of the respect with which he held it fitting to read and accept God's signified Will.

CHAPTER IV.

Conformity of our Will to that of God for our Salvation.

GOD has made known His desire for our salvation in so many ways, that no man but must be conscious of it. It was with this design that He created us in His Own Image and Likeness, and then again took ours upon Himself in the Incarnation, yet further undergoing death that He might redeem man, with such love that, as S. Denys records, He once revealed to a holy man named Carpus that He would even die anew to save man, were it needful.

Now although all men be not saved, nevertheless it is His Will that all should be saved, working in us according to His nature and ours; for His Goodness leads Him to give us freely that grace by which we can attain to glory, while our nature requires that we have free choice left us to accept that grace and be saved, or to despise it and perish.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple,"¹ so says David. But what is it to enjoy the fair Beauty of the Lord, save to receive and make known His Perfections to others? "His delight is with the sons of men,"² *i.e.*

¹ Ps. xxvii. 4.

² Prov. viii. 31.

to pour out His Grace upon them. Nothing is so acceptable as to effect one's own will, and our sanctification is God's Will,¹ our salvation His Good Pleasure. Nor is there any difference between His Will and His Pleasure; it is good, forasmuch as it is all love and benevolence towards man.

The whole Church, militant and triumphant, sings the praise of His dear Love for us, and His Sacred Body bears the tokens thereof; therefore in "visiting His Temple," above all other times, we realise that Love in which He delights.

Be it ours many times daily to contemplate that Loving Will, and, resigning ours wholly to it, let us cry out, "O Infinite Sweetness, Thou alone art worthy! Thou hast made me for life eternal, and Thou feedest me with the ever-flowing milk of Thy Loving-kindness! Would that I could cling more uninterruptedly to Thy Breast!"

We ought to will our own salvation, even as God wills it, and forasmuch as that is through exceeding desire, we too should earnestly desire it. Nor does God stop there, but He endows us with all the necessary means, which we should earnestly accept and use. It may be enough to say, "I desire to be saved," but it is not enough to say, "I desire to make use of the suitable means of grace to that end;" we must resolutely use the grace given us, or our will does not correspond with God's Will. Real conformity of will requires that we accept and use the means He sets before us as He desires, and because He desires it.

Sometimes it may be that we seem to accept the means of salvation as a whole, and yet shrink back from the individual use thereof, just as S. Peter, who thought himself ready to die for his Master, and yet denied Him for fear of a maid-servant. We all think we can "drink the cup of the Lord," but when it is offered us we shrink and start back. That which

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

is actually present overpowers us. For this reason it is well to make special resolutions in meditation. David accepted troubles in detail as steps to perfection, when he exclaimed, "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes."¹ And in the same spirit the Apostles "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for their Saviour's Name."²

CHAPTER V.

The Conformity of our Will to God's, as signified to us in His Commandments.

ALL Holy Scripture bears witness to God's exceeding desire that we keep His Commandments, alike in the abundant rewards held out to those who do so, and the stringent punishments to those who forsake them. "Thou hast charged, that we shall diligently keep Thy Commandments."³ Now the love of complacency, realising this Divine desire, seeks to please God by conformity to it; and the love of benevolence, which would have all things to submit to God, hastens to submit our will and wishes to whatever He signifies. Thence springs, not a mere obedience, but a real love of God's Commandments, such as is the keynote of the whole 119th Psalm: "Lord, what love have I unto Thy Law: all the day long is my study in it."

If we would foster this holy love for God's Law, we must consider and dwell upon its beauty. All God's Commandments are good; but just as there are certain acts which are bad because they are forbidden, and others forbidden because they are bad, so some are good because they are commanded, and others which are commanded because they are excellent. So that all are good and excellent, obedience imparting

¹ Ps. cxix. 71.

² Acts v. 41.

³ Ps. cxix. 4.

virtue to such as are indifferent, and increasing it in those which are intrinsically good.

A benefit loses half its grace if it comes from an unfriendly hand. Thus the Lacedemonians of old would not accept even the wise counsel of an evil man until it had been taken up and repeated by one of good repute. No gift is so welcome as that of a friend, and a law appears hard or light according to the spirit in which it is imposed, just as Jacob's seven years' service seemed to him but as a day for the love he bore Rachel. Truly the yoke of the Christian's law is light, laid on us as it is by so gracious a Monarch!

Some men keep the Commandments much as we gulp down medicine, more for fear of eternal condemnation than because they delight in pleasing their Lord. And just as there are people who are disgusted with remedies not unpleasant in themselves, simply because they are called medicine, so there are minds which revolt from all prescribed duties, simply because they are prescribed; as it is told of a man who had lived for eighty years contentedly in Paris, till being then commanded not to leave the town, he forthwith rushed out to see the country, for which he never cared before!

But on the other hand, a loving heart takes pleasure in God's Law, and the harder it seems, the more such a heart delights in it, as the means of rendering Him greater glory. "My lips shall speak of Thy praise . . . my tongue shall sing of Thy Word; for all Thy commandments are righteous."¹ The traveller who sings on his way voluntarily makes a fresh tax on his strength, but it is one which cheers and lightens his toil; and so the spiritual pilgrim realises that nothing so relieves his weariness as the loving fulfilment of his Master's precepts: "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage"² There is a tradition that the sweetness of the fig is so heavy that

¹ Ps. cxix. 171, 172.

² Ps. cxix. 54.

cattle bearing that cargo sink under the load ; a type of the unholy man, who is, "like the mule, which hath no understanding," under the sweet Law of the Lord, which crushes him in his weakness. Another tradition tells us that the traveller who carries a sprig of the *Agnus castus* feels no weariness, and so those who really love God find refreshment and vigour in the yoke of Christ. There is no toil in that which we love ; or if toil there be, it is welcome, for toil and love combined are even more grateful to the Christian than ease. It is thus that holy love brings us into conformity with God's Will, and teaches us to obey His Commandments because they are His, rather than out of mere mechanical obedience, turning necessity into pleasure, and hardship to delight.

CHAPTER VI.

Conformity of our Will to that which God has signified by His Counsels.

GOD'S Law expresses a stringent will on His part Who makes it, while His Counsels do but represent His wish : the first is binding, the latter only incites compliance. Those who break the Commandments are guilty ; they who neglect God's Counsels do but fail to win all the favour which is within their reach. The first deserve condemnation, the last decrease the recompense awaiting them. There is a difference between command and recommendation : command implies authority to enforce, recommendation friendship which incites and stimulates ; the one constrains, the other merely urges to that which is preferable. We obey a command, we heed a counsel ; we follow a counsel in order to please, we obey a command for fear of displeasing. And so the love of complacency which leads us to please the Beloved One also leads us to follow His Counsels ;

and the love of benevolence, which requires all wills and affections to be subject to Him, leads us to will, not merely His Law, but that which He teaches and counsels, just as a dutiful son seeks to comply, not only with his father's literal orders, but with his wishes and likings.

Counsel is given for the benefit of him who receives it, and for his perfection. "If thou wilt be perfect," our Saviour said, "sell that thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come and follow Me."¹ But the loving heart does not dwell chiefly on its own advantage, but rather on the wish of Him Who counsels; and thus it seeks to discover God's Mind therein. And He does not give His Counsels to all alike, but they are diverse according to person, time, place, and capacity, as the law of charity dictates; for charity, the queen of all virtues, commandments, and counsels, disposes them, together with all Christian graces, according to need.

For instance, when parents need their children to support or tend them, it is not the time to follow the counsel of retiring from the world; since charity bids a man rather obey the commandment, "Honour thy father and mother." A prince, on whose posterity his country depends for good and lawful government, may not seek a life of celibacy. He who is in fragile health, needing care and comfort, has no right to seek voluntary poverty; neither is it lawful for the father of a family to sell all he has, and leave wife and children unprovided for. Counsels of perfection are given to Christians, but not all to every Christian. Circumstances make them impossible, useless, or even harmful, to certain persons, as our Lord has taught us in the words, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."² All the counsels of perfection are clearly not available to all men, though they may be a measure and standard to judge by. Charity moves some to poverty, and deters

¹ Matt. xix. 21.

² Matt. xix. 12.

others ; it inclines some to marriage, others to continence ; it sends one to the cloister, another to the world ; it is not bound to give account to any, for it has full power over the Christian law ; it "can do all things." If any one questions this, it may answer, "The Lord hath need of him," for whatever is done of charity is done for God ; all things serve charity, and it only serves its Beloved, and that as a bride, not a slave. Charity is as the sacred river which waters the Church's soil, and while it is colourless like all pure water, it brings forth many-coloured flowers—the rose-red martyr, the virgin lily, the deep violet of mortification, the pale gold of the heart's-ease, thus turning all counsels to the perfection of those souls which are so blessed as to live beneath its influence.

CHAPTER VII.

How Love for God's Will, as signified in His Commandments, leads us to Love for His Counsels.

VERILY God's Will is to be desired beyond all things, being as it is the law of very love itself. The Hebrews use the word "peace" as summing up all blessings, and being felicity itself ; even as David says, "Great is the peace that they have who love Thy Law, and they are not offended at it."¹ Assuredly he who was "a man after God's own Heart" entered so thoroughly into the perfection of the Divine Law, that he could say with the fullest meaning, "My delight is in Thy Commandments."

When the Bride of the Canticles seeks to describe the exquisite perfumes of her Bridegroom, she says, "The savour of Thy good ointment is as ointment poured forth," *i.e.* "Thou art so wholly sweetness, that

¹ Ps. cxix. 165.

Thou mayest rather be called perfume itself than perfumed." So the soul which loves God is so transformed into His Will that it may more aptly be called His Will than merely subject to that Will. The Prophet Isaiah says of the Church that it "shall be called by a new name, which the Mouth of the Lord shall name;"¹ and again, "For the Lord delighteth in thee,"² as though to show that they who are not Christians follow their own will; but the true children of Christ renounce their will, and are subject only to His sovereign Will, which rules over all; the one characteristic of Christians being that their will is merged in that of God.

Isaiah's words were fulfilled in the primitive Church when, as S. Luke says, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one mind;"³ not meaning thereby the bodily heart, or the spirit which moves it with mere earthly life, but that heart and mind which are the principle of one supernatural life, which is neither more nor less than the Will of God.

"In His Pleasure is life," the Psalmist says;⁴ not merely because our temporal life depends upon His Divine Will, but because our spiritual life hangs upon its fulfilment, through which God lives and reigns in us, enabling us to live in Him. But the sinner "of old time" has cast off the yoke of the Lord, saying, "I will not serve;"⁵ so that God says through Isaiah, "Thou wast called a transgressor from the womb,"⁶ and again, "Thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast set thine heart as the Heart of God,"⁷ for the rebellious mind seeks to be independent and as a God to itself. Such an one will not have God to reign over him. Yet surely we came into this world, not to do our will, but that of Him that sent us, even as the Saviour Himself fulfilled the Father's Will from the first

¹ Isa. lxii. 2.

² Isa. lxii. 4.

³ Acts iv. 32.

⁴ Ps. xxx. 5.

⁵ Jer. ii. 5. See margin.

⁶ Isa. xlvi. 8.

⁷ Ezek. xxviii. 2.

moment of His Incarnation: "In the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy Will, O My God . . . yea, Thy Law is within My Heart."¹

And when any man loves God's Will intensely, he is not content merely to obey it as signified in the Commandments, but he strives to follow those counsels which, as S. Thomas says, are given us for the more perfect observance of the original Law of God. He who voluntarily renounces lawful indulgences is not likely to seek forbidden pleasures, and he who embraces voluntary poverty is in little danger of coveting other men's goods; while he who readily submits his will to human authority, the better to serve God, will scarcely persist in following his own will rather than God's. We read of King David, when he was fighting with the Philistines who held Bethlehem, that he exclaimed longingly, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!"² Forthwith three mighty men broke through the hosts of the Philistines, drew the water, and brought it to the king, who, seeing how they had brought it, "through jeopardy of their lives, would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord." Worthy warriors, devoted to the service of their prince, they gladly braved the extremest peril to satisfy a mere passing wish; and our Lord has given certain Counsels (such as poverty, widowhood, self-renunciation, and the like) to which what He said of perpetual virginity assuredly applies, that they who are able should receive them. And at the mere utterance of His wish many brave Christian warriors have started forth, and, boldly facing all difficulties, have attained the crown of eternal glory by their devoted perseverance in obeying their Master's wish.

David tells us that God does not merely "hear the desire" of His faithful servants, but He furthers their

¹ Ps. xl. 10.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 15.

merest wish : "Thou preparest their heart,"¹ so ready is He to forward the will of those that love Him. Does it not beseem us on our part to be so jealously eager to fulfil His Holy Will as not to rest content with keeping His bare Commandments, but to study His every wish? A generous soul requires no greater stimulus to action than a knowledge of the wish of its Beloved : "My soul failed [went forth] when my Beloved spake."²

CHAPTER VIII.

Contempt for the Evangelic Counsels is a great Sin.

NO one can question that we are bound to seek after perfection, if he will study the urgent, loving words with which our Lord has set it before us : "Be ye perfect, even as your Father Which is in Heaven is perfect ;"³ "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy ;"⁴ "He that is holy, let him be holy still."⁵ S. Bernard says, "The righteous man is never satisfied ; he for ever hungers and thirsts after righteousness."

In temporal matters, he is never satisfied who is not content with a sufficiency, for what can satisfy endless cravings? But in things spiritual, he who is satisfied with what he has has not enough ; nor is any sufficiency satisfying, because the very craving for more is an essential part of an abundance of spiritual wealth. In the creation God bade the earth bring forth the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself ;⁶ and experience teaches us that the vegetable creation does not attain maturity or perfection until it bears seed for the reproduction of kind. Nor does virtue ever

¹ Ps. x. 19.

² Cant. v. 6.

³ Matt. v. 48.

⁴ Lev. xi. 44.

⁵ Rev. xxii. 11.

⁶ Gen. i. 11.

attain to fulness or perfection until it produces the desire of progress and advancement in righteousness. The spiritual ground of man's heart is bidden to bring forth herbs yielding the fruit of good works, each after its kind, and the seeds of good desires and intentions must ripen and fructify. The virtue which bears no such seed is immature and profitless. "How now?" S. Bernard says to the slothful, "thou wilt not go on towards perfection? neither wilt thou fall backwards? What then, wouldst thou remain stationary, neither better nor worse? Verily, you ask that which cannot be. Nothing in this world abides unchanged, and of man especially it is written that 'he continueth not.'¹ Needs must be that he go onwards, or that he fall away."

S. Bernard says not, neither would I say, that not to follow the Counsels is sin, as indeed the very difference between commandment and counsel is that the first constrains, while the latter only invites. Nevertheless it is sin to neglect Christian perfection, or our Lord's call thereto; still more to despise those means which He points out as the way to attain it. It were a grievous error to say that our Lord's Counsels were not good—it were blasphemy to say like the wicked to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways;"² but it is also a fearful irreverence to reply to His loving call that we care not for holiness, nor desire to follow His Counsels, nor to advance towards perfection.

Not to comply with these Counsels is not in itself sin; as, for instance, he who has not courage to sell all and give to the poor, he who has not strength of will to abstain from marriage, or who loves some one too well to do so—these men sin not. But he who deliberately rejects all Christ's Counsels, who rejects them as unprofitable or worthless, not because he is personally moved to some other course in any special matter, but out of contempt—that man despises Christ

¹ Job xiv. 2.

² Job xxi. 14.

Among men it is possible to despise advice without despising the giver, because all men are liable to err ; but no one can reject or despise God's Counsel save from contempt of the Giver, which is blasphemy, as though He were not All-wise and All-good. Neither can the precepts of the Church be lightly despised, because the Church is guided and governed by the Holy Spirit, Who "guides it into all truth."

CHAPTER IX.

All Men can respect, if all cannot follow, the Evangelic Counsels, and each Man ought to follow them so far as he is able.

WHILE, then, every Christian neither can nor ought to be bound by all the Counsels, every one is bound to respect them all. There may be many things good and excellent in themselves, although not adapted to every one. You would not question the sweetness of a perfume because it chanced to be unacceptable to you who have a headache? or the richness of a garment of cloth-of-gold because it does not become you? or the value of a ring which does not fit your finger? Even so let us admire and prize all our Lord's Counsels to men, for He is the One True and Mighty Counsellor, and as Solomon says, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."¹ What a friend, what counsels have we in Christ! Truly His Word is sweeter than the honeycomb; it giveth light and understanding to the simple!

Again, when we see others rising up to the Counsels which are above us, we should further them in all possible ways, whether by practical help or by prayer; for charity bids us seek not our own welfare only, but that of our neighbour.

¹ Prov. xxvii. 9.

The best proof of our respect for all Christ's Counsels is a devout observance of those which are suitable to ourselves ; for just as he who holds one article of faith because God has revealed and taught it through His Church cannot reject the other like articles, or as he who observes one commandment out of love to God will observe the rest as occasion offers, so he who loves and venerates any one evangelic counsel because God has given it, will assuredly love and venerate all the others which come equally from God. No one can follow all the Counsels at once, but we may live in continual practice of one or other, for God has purposely made them numerous and diversified, and the willing heart will find daily opportunity for practising one or another.

You who contemplate the religious life, does charity require you to remain at home and minister to your parents, do so in a loving spirit, while cherishing the thought of self-devotion when your filial mission shall no longer claim you. Or you whose vocation is married life, live therein in all purity and honour. When you cannot do everything, do what you can heartily. You may not be bound to seek reconciliation with one who has sinned against you, it may be rather his part to seek you ; yet, nevertheless, remember the Saviour's Counsel, and render him good for evil ; heap coals of fire on his head in love, burning up all ill-will and constraining love. You may not be bound to give to all the needy whom you meet ; nevertheless follow your Saviour's precept, and as far as possible relieve the wants of all who come across you. You are not bound to take any vows upon you, but if there be any specially calculated to forward your soul's progress, as advised by your spiritual guide, do not hesitate. You are free to use wine within the limits of temperance, but bear in mind S. Paul's counsel to Timothy, and take no more than is requisite for health.

There are different degrees of perfection even in the Counsels, *e.g.* lending to the poor is one step in

almsgiving ; it is a higher step to give ; higher yet to give all a man has, and the highest of all is when he gives himself to their service. Hospitality is a counsel ; to receive strangers is one step thereof ; to go and seek them like Abraham is higher, and to devote one's self to a life of hardship and peril, amid perpetual snow and tempest, as our countryman S. Bernard de Menthon did, living upon the mountain-side to succour the traveller, is the highest form of hospitality. Visiting the sick who are not in extreme necessity is a counsel, better still it is to minister to them, while to devote one's self to their service like the Hospitallers, or Sisters of Charity, is highest of all : "Whatsoever ye have done unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

All virtues are elastic, and generally speaking we are not bound to strain them to the utmost ; enough if we go so far as we are able. But those who can carry them to the highest perfection follow Christ's Counsels. It may be that there are rare occasions when some extraordinary effort is necessary for a man to keep hold of God's Grace ; as, *e.g.*, the sentinel at Sebaste, who, beholding how one of the forty prisoners about to suffer fell away from his martyr's crown, hastened voluntarily himself to take the place, and so filled up the ranks of the Lord's true soldiers. Or S. Audactus, who, seeing S. Felix led to martyrdom, cried out of his own accord, "I am a Christian, even as he !" and embracing the martyr, he went forth with him, and shared his death. Many early martyrs did the like, and, when it was perfectly justifiable to avoid death, they nobly chose to suffer through exceeding love. Martyrdom, when the only alternative is denial of the faith, is truly a very admirable and worthy token of love and strength ; yet we must grant that there is more generosity and heroism in a voluntary martyrdom for love's sake. And there is no way whereby we can so closely imitate our Dear Lord as by heroic acts of virtue, all His Graces being, as S.

Thomas says, heroic from the moment of His Conception, and even higher than heroic, inasmuch as He was not man, but God.

CHAPTER X.

How to conform to God's Will, as signified by Inspiration, and of the various means by which God so inspires us.

AS the sun's rays give light and heat simultaneously, so the heavenly rays of inspiration not only light our path and make it plain, but kindle vigour in our heart to follow on.

All nature is benumbed by the winter's cold, but the first return of vernal warmth restores life and motion to the world; the birds sing, and vegetation bursts forth. So without the help of inspiration our souls would remain passive and dull; but so soon as these heavenly rays touch us, we feel light and warmth, which rouse the will, kindle the understanding, and give us strength to seek and to do that which is profitable to salvation. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,"¹ *i.e.* a soul which imparted life, movement, and action to the body. This same Eternal God breathes the breath of eternal life into our souls, so that, as S. Paul says, we gain "a quickening spirit,"² *i.e.* a spirit which enables us to live, move, and act according to grace; so that He Who first gave us being gives us likewise our spiritual being. The breath of man has had power to animate—witness the Shunamite's child, whose "flesh waxed warm" when the Prophet Elisha breathed upon it.³ But the Breath of God not merely animates, ¹ gives perfect light, for the Spirit of God is very Light Itself, Whose life-giving Breath we call inspiration.

¹ Gen. ii. 7.

² 1 Cor. xv. 45.

³ 2 Kings iv. 34.

and it is by this Spirit that He breathes into our soul His Own gracious desires and intentions.

Various are the ways by which He inspires men. External objects were made channels of inspiration to S. Antony, S. Francis, S. Anselm, and many others. One ordinary means is by preaching; but as there are often those who do not profit by the Word, sorrow and reproof "beget understanding."¹ S. Mary of Egypt was inspired by the sight of a picture of Our Lady; S. Antony by hearing the Gospel read at the Altar; Francis Borgia, Duke of Candia, by seeing the dead body of the Empress; S. Pachomius by a work of charity; S. Ignatius Loyola by the lives of the Saints, S. Cyprian (not of Carthage) by the devil's confession that he could not touch a soul which trusted in God.

When I was a lad in Paris, two students (one was a heretic) had been spending the night in drinking, when suddenly the bells rang out for matins from the Carthusian convent in the Faubourg S. Jacques, and, talking about it together, "How different," the heretic exclaimed, "such a life from ours—as wide apart as angels and brutes!" The next day he visited the church, and was so struck with the sight of the fathers, motionless as statues in their stalls, absorbed in devotion, that he resolved then and there to become a member of the Church of Christ, a resolution which he did not fail to carry out.

Thrice blessed they whose hearts are ever open to God's holy inspirations; they will never lack all such as are needful for their guidance and preservice. Just as God gives every animal, in the order of nature, such instincts as are necessary for its preservation, so in the spiritual life He gives to all who resist not His Grace such inspiration as is requisite thereto. Remember the faithful Eliezer, how he prayed, "Behold I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. Let it come to

¹ Prov. xv. 32.

pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink ; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also, let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac.”¹ Eliezer asked only for water for himself, but Rebecca, inspired of God, offered to water the camels also, and thus she became Isaac’s bride, and ancestress of our Saviour. Verily, those souls which do not rest content with doing that which their Heavenly Bridegroom requires of them, but are quick to obey His every inspiration, these are they which the Lord chooses to be the brides of His Beloved Son. And forasmuch as Eliezer was unable of himself to discern which maiden was destined for his master’s son, God made it known to him by inspiration. When we know not what to do, and human counsel fails to relieve our perplexity, then God will inspire us, and if we obey Him in all humility He will not suffer us to go astray.

I have spoken still more fully concerning inspirations in the “Devout Life,” and need say no more now.

CHAPTER XI.

The Union of our Will with that of God, when He inspires us to Extraordinary Acts of Virtue. Perseverance in Vocation a first Test of Inspiration.

THERE is a certain series of inspirations which chiefly tends to extraordinary perfection in the discharge of ordinary Christian duties. Charity towards the sick is an ordinary practice among real Christians, but it was fulfilled after an extraordinary manner by the great self-devotion of S. Francis and S. Catherine of Sienna, or by the royal S. Louis, who is described to us by a certain Abbé of Citeaux

¹ Gen. xxiv. 13, 14.

as kneeling bareheaded before a poor sufferer, whose terrible cancerous wounds he was reverently dressing. So was it an extraordinary devotion which led the same monarch to wait upon the poor he fed, and afterwards himself to eat their leavings. When S. Jerome received the pilgrims who fled from the Goths in his hospital at Bethlehem, he was not content merely to wash their feet, but he washed and groomed their camels also. S. Francis carried evangelic poverty to the highest perfection, and no less the grace of simplicity. Thus we read of his buying a lamb that was to be slaughtered because it was a type of our Lord. He revered all creation, remembering the Hand Which framed all things, and might be seen lifting up worms from off the road and placing them in safety, because the Lord had likened Himself to a worm. He was wont to call all living creatures his brothers and sisters, being the offspring of the same Maker with himself.

S. Alexis, a noble Roman, carried personal abnegation so far as to remain for seventeen years in his father's house unrecognised save as a poor pilgrim. But the practice of any such extraordinary matters requires great discretion and judgment; nor should they be hastily undertaken, lest the enemy of souls turn them into a snare, and the soul should rather lose than gain. He is very apt to prompt us to begin some good work which we are not likely to follow up, and so be the more readily discouraged and faint-hearted. It serves his purpose only too well when men make beginnings, so long as they accomplish nothing. Just as Pharaoh of old heeded not how many sons the Hebrew women brought to the birth provided they did not live, so is it with men's good resolutions in his eyes; whereas, as S. Jerome tells us, the best beginnings are unimportant unless they are brought to a good end. Food does not nourish if a man takes more than his digestion can assimilate. The deceits of Satan would keep us lingering amid

the promises of spring ; but God's Holy Spirit teaches us to think of our good beginnings only as a step towards a better end ; and the ripe fruit of autumn is the true test of spring flowers and their value.

S. Thomas says it is inexpedient to make excessive delays and seek various counsel in deciding upon a true vocation, but having once decided on good grounds, whether in this or any matter having reference to God's service, a man should be firm, and not suffer himself to be unsettled by any seemingly better suggestion ; because, to quote S. Bernard, the devil often tries to divert men from one good deed under pretext of somewhat better, until he succeeds in hindering them from any steadfast, persistent work.

S. Anselm compares the soul which is fickle in its pursuit of good to an oft-transplanted shrub, which takes no root and bears no fruit. The sacred living creatures described by the Prophet Ezekiel "went every one straight forward ; whither the Spirit was to go they went, and they turned not when they went."¹ So we must needs go whither God's Holy Spirit sends us, turning neither backward nor aside, but going straight on, as He appoints. Let him who is on the right road keep to it ; men are too apt to leave what is good to seek what is better,² whereby they often lose one without finding the other. Better a small but certain possession, than great expectations of what may never be. That is a suspicious inspiration which moves a man to peril an unquestionable good for a possible something better.

We read of a young Portuguese who was making great progress in spiritual things, as also in preaching, under S. Philip Neri, in the Oratory at Rome, until he fancied himself inspired to leave that Society for the Dominican Order. S. Philip, assisting at his reception, wept sorely, and being questioned as to the reason, answered, "I weep to see so many virtues

¹ Ezek. i. 12.

² There is an old saying, "*Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.*"

thrown away." And indeed this youth, who had been so devout a member of the congregation, fell away, and was the cause of serious scandal to the Order he had joined.

When the plover¹ sees a sportsman approach her nest, she hovers before him, making believe to be lame or wounded ; then, taking flight, she will drop as though exhausted, in order to lure her enemy to follow her, and so distract his attention from her nest, until, having beguiled him afar off, she takes to the wing and escapes. Just so when Satan sees any one using God's inspirations, and seeking to lead a devout and holy life, he tries to tempt him hither and thither, in pursuit of this or that supposed advantage, until at length he succeeds altogether in diverting him from the attainment of perfection. A young hound will continually follow some fresh scent, but old dogs which know their business are never misled, steadily following on their original track. Let it be the aim of every one, having found what is God's Will as to his vocation, to persevere stedfastly therein, as in those duties and practices which are most conformable to it, seeking to be discreet, as well as zealous in pursuit of perfection.

CHAPTER XII.

The Union of our Will with that of God when He inspires us to do what seems contrary to His Ordinary Laws. Peace and Quiet a second Test of Inspiration.

SUCH inspirations as the above are extraordinary only inasmuch as they incite men to seek a more than ordinary fervour and perfection in the performance of common duties. There is another class of

¹ S. Francis attributes these touching wiles to the partridge, but any one accustomed to the moors must have seen the plover carrying them on in nesting-time.

inspirations, which not only urge the soul beyond ordinary limits, but which incite it to deeds which are intrinsically opposed to the Church's laws, and which are more subjects for marvel than for imitation. Such is the tale we read of Eusebia, who left her native Rome disguised in male attire, only resuming her proper dress later on, when the Bishop of Mylassa took her under his guidance, until after a while she founded a monastery, and died at length in the odour of sanctity, although her first steps seem inconsistent with Christian modesty.

Again, we read of a certain youth who, having kicked his mother, was smitten with overwhelming repentance, and coming to S. Antony of Padua with his grief, the Saint said, meaning to express his strong sense of the crime, that the offending member deserved to be cut off! Whereupon the youth went home, and, acting on the words, cut off his foot. We should be tempted to count this as a temptation but for the miracle by which S. Antony healed the foot. Again, S. Paul the first hermit, S. Antony, S. Mary of Egypt, and others, surely did not bury their youth in the wilderness, far from Sacraments and outward help, without powerful inspiration. Who could approve a life so impossible to any one unassisted by Heavenly inspiration as that led by S. Simeon Stylites? or the conduct of S. John the Silent, who forsook his diocese and concealed himself in a solitude? or S. Paulinus, who sold himself to redeem a widow's son, a thing he had no right to do, belonging as he did to his Church and people in virtue of his episcopal consecration? Or again, certain women, who in times of persecution disfigured their faces to defend their honour, were they not committing an unlawful deed?

Now one of the surest tests of the truth of any extraordinary inspiration is whether the heart receiving it be calm and peaceful, for God's Spirit is ever soft and gentle, albeit vigorous. It may come "like a mighty rushing wind," but it does not overwhelm

or terrify ; and the fear which came upon the Apostles was followed by great peace when the cloven tongues of fire "sat on the head of each of them." Our Dear Lord is called the Prince of Peace, and the Bride of the Canticles a Sulamite, *i.e.* "the daughter of peace ;" for the Voice of her Bridegroom, which was the Voice of God's Spirit, neither troubled nor dismayed her. Her soul melted within her, but with sweetness, not with terror ; and even amid "the company of two armies" ¹ she was at rest. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were inspired of God beyond most men, were peaceful and quiet in their lives ; Moses was "the meekest of men ;" David was noted for his gentleness. But on the other hand the evil spirit is restless, turbulent, aggressive, and they who are led by his infernal instigations may generally be recognised by their proud, perverse, unquiet ways, upsetting all order under a pretence of zeal, criticising, offending everybody, intolerant of all save their own self-love, which they disguise beneath the name of jealousy for God's Honour.

CHAPTER XIII.

**Obedience to the Church, and to those set over us,
the third Test of Inspiration.**

HUMILITY is the inseparable adjunct of peace and gentleness. But there is a spurious humility, consisting in words, gestures, and outward obeisance, which easily exists where there is no interior consciousness of abjection, and no reverence for others. All this is mere trifling, a mere phantom of humility. But on the other hand there is a generous, practical humility, which makes a man docile, and ready to receive advice or admonition. When S. Simeon Stylites was a novice at Toledo, he was so self-willed

¹ Cant. vi. 13.

in his voluntary asceticism, that he was dismissed the monastery. But he conquered this, and became so spiritually submissive, that when the hermits from the deserts of Antioch sent to inquire wherefore he had chosen to follow a manner of life so unheard of on his column; bidding him come down and live like other men, he yielded, and was about to descend; whereupon the pious hermits resolved that such ready obedience was a token of God's inspiration, and they bade him forbear, and abide on his column, for he was surely fulfilling God's Will thereby. And indeed he received grace to persevere in that wondrous life for thirty years. Whatever is done in an obedient spirit is trustworthy; whatever sets that at defiance is suspicious.

The heart which is inspired of God will first and foremost be inspired to obey; of which S. Paul is a remarkable instance, for was not the chief feature in God's message to him a command to go to the city and learn from Ananias what he should do? Ananias being, as S. Dorotheus has said, the Bishop of Damascus. Be sure that any man who professes to be inspired, yet refuses submission to his rightful superiors, is an impostor. All Divinely-inspired prophets and preachers have been faithful to the Church's teaching, conforming to her doctrine, and diligent in affirming that "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth."¹ And thus all irregular, self-reliant inspirations can but be treated as illusory. There is no other way whereby Moses and the Prophets can agree. S. Francis, S. Dominic, and others, were raised up for the service of souls by God's extraordinary inspiration; but none were ever more dutiful sons of the Church. In short, the three surest tests of true inspiration are perseverance as opposed to levity, calm and quietness as opposed to restlessness, and humble obedience as opposed to self-will and obstinacy.

¹ Mal. ii. 7.

In the world of nature we find many flowers which turn round with the sun as it runs its course ; but the sunflower, specially so called, moves not its corolla only, but the whole plant.¹ Even so all God's elect turn their hearts in obedience to His Will as signified by His Commandments ; but those souls which are specially filled with Divine Love are not content with mere obedience, but, by total union of all their affections, of their whole being, they follow the Sun of Righteousness throughout His course, keenly alive to every counsel or inspiration, without any exception. So that they may truly say with the Psalmist, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand ; Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory."² And again, "I was as it were a beast before Thee ;"³ for as a well-trained horse is guided, turned hither and thither with the lightest touch of his rider, so the loving soul is absolutely led by the Hand of God, sensitive to His every movement and Will.

CHAPTER XIV.

How to recognise the Will of God.

S. BASIL says, that where God's Will is absolute it is made clearly known to us by His commands or precepts, which leave us no alternative ; but there are other matters in which we are left free to choose our own course, always bearing in mind that all things lawful are not always expedient, and that

¹ This tradition concerning the sunflower, or *Girasole*, gave rise to those lovely lines—

" Oh, the heart that once truly loved never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the Sunflower turns her last look when He sets
To her God, as she turned when He rose."

² Ps. lxxiii. 22, 23.

³ Ps. lxxiii. 21.

the assistance of a wise spiritual guide is often necessary to help us in deciding our course.

Meanwhile, beware of one harassing temptation with which Satan often hinders souls which are earnestly set upon doing everything to the utmost in accordance with God's Will. This is the raising of scruples as to whether a man had better do one thing rather than another in some trifle—whether he shall join some social gathering or not, whether he shall observe certain days rather than others, indulge in some innocent amusement, or the like ; and while he is fidgeting and fretting over his scruples as to what is best, he loses the opportunity of doing some unquestionable good deed, which would be more to God's Glory than all this weighing of scruples.

Men do not weigh the current small coin ; it would take too much time to be perpetually testing our pence and farthings. Nor, in the spiritual life, have we time to be for ever debating and comparing the merit of every trifle ; indeed, such scruples are apt to become simply superstitious, and that is no faithful service which wastes half its time in resolving what to do, instead of doing what is requisite. The consideration given to any work should be measured by its importance ; there is no need to make as weighty preparations for a day's journey as for a long voyage. When it is a question of choosing a vocation, of coming to some important decision, undertaking some lasting responsibility, or some vast expenditure, of a change of abode, of permanent association with others, or the like, we must, indeed, bestow serious consideration to ascertain what is God's Will in the matter ; but in ordinary daily life, where the alternative is comparatively indifferent, there is no need to be full of restless scruples and consultations. Why should I make myself anxious as to whether one set of devotions will be more acceptable to God than another, when there is really no very great difference between them ? or whether I had better go to church or visit a hospital,

or go to one service rather than another? There is nothing worthy of scruple in such matters as these, and it is best to be simple and straightforward about them, doing whatever seems best without worrying ourselves, losing time, and incurring the danger always attending on scruples. Of course this only applies to things which are really indifferent, and where there is not more duty on one side than the other.

Even in matters of greater weight we need to be humble, and mistrustful of self, not thinking to discover God's Will by our own cleverness or quickness of perception. After seeking light from the Holy Spirit, and diligently employing our own faculties to know God's Will, and after consulting our spiritual guide, (or others, if need be), it is best to decide on our course, as in God's Sight, and then not to look back or admit doubts as to our decision, but to persevere steadily, quietly, and trustfully. Even if difficulties and temptations, which are common to all beginnings, should lead us to question the wisdom of our choice, it is best to be firm, and not dwell upon the doubt, but to bear in mind that, had we decided differently, we might have been still worse off; not to say that it may be God's Will to try us by consolation or tribulation, by peace or by war. Once having taken a resolution on right grounds, never look back; if the principle was right, so will the work be, and any other course is merely an indication of self-will or folly.

BOOK IX.

THE LOVE OF SUBMISSION, BY WHICH OUR WILL IS UNITED TO GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE.

CHAPTER I.

**The Union of our Will with God's Will, called the
Will of Good Pleasure.**

NOTHING, save sin, happens without God's Will, which we call absolute, and His Good Pleasure, which no one can hinder, and is made manifest to us by its results.

Let us look around at all that ever has been, is, or will be, and, filled with wonder and love, we shall cry out with the Psalmist, "I will praise Thy Name because of Thy Loving-kindness and Truth ; for Thou hast magnified Thy Name and Thy Word above all things. . . . Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me ; I cannot attain to it !" And this admiring love will be followed by the love of complacency, whereby we rejoice in God's Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, which three attributes are specially exemplified in this our universe.

Think of men and angels with all that marvellous variety of nature, quality, faculty, affection, passion, grace, and privilege with which God's Providence has endowed these His creatures, and say in David's words, "My song shall be of mercy and judgment ; unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing."¹

Nor can we, while contemplating His Mercy, fail

¹ Ps. ci. 1.

to marvel at the grandeur of God's Justice, both alike being the utterance of His Divine Power, yet the severity of justice softened as it is by the tenderness of mercy ; so that amid the floods of His just wrath, the olive-branch is yet within reach of the dovelike soul which seeks the pledge of love. And so all sorrow and toil, yea, even death itself, which God has appointed as the meed of sin, are likewise by His Mercy so many ladders by which we mount up to Heaven. Blessed are poverty, hunger, thirst, sorrow, sickness, death, persecution ; for, albeit the penalty of sin, they are so tempered by God's Grace and Love, that their very bitterness becomes sweet ! One can almost say that the lost themselves, but for their hatred of God, would find consolation in their flames by pondering on His Mercy. But the saints, while they exclaim, " Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and true is Thy Judgment,"^{*} cannot fail to see that even His judgments are lighter than the sins which incurred them, and that " even in wrath He remembers mercy."

Or again, let us look at home, and consider the innumerable blessings, visible and invisible, as likewise the inward and outward trials which God in His Justice and Mercy has bestowed upon us, and let us heartily accept His Holy Will, and say from the bottom of our heart, " Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven." Yea, Lord, Thy Will be done here on earth, where no joy is unmixed, no rose without its thorn, no day without night, no spring without winter ; on earth, where comforts are few and toils abound ! But here, as in Heaven, Thy Will be done by us ; not merely by active obedience to Thy Commandments, Thy Counsels, and Thine inspirations, but also by patient endurance of whatever sufferings or afflictions Thou mayest send us, so that Thy Will ever work in us, for us, and by us, as seemeth best to Thee.

^{*} Ps. cxix. 137.

CHAPTER II.

**Man's Will is best united to God's Good Pleasure
amid Tribulation.**

SUFFERING in itself cannot be acceptable ; but if we look to the Divine Will and Providence Which ordains it, we shall welcome it. Moses' rod when on the ground was a fearful serpent, but in his hand it became a wonder-working rod ; even so afflictions, seen by themselves, are terrible, seen by the light of God's Will they are blessings. The sick man rejects the potion offered by his doctor, but accepts it gratefully when some beloved one tenders the cup. Verily, love either takes away the bitterness of trial, or else gives us courage to accept it. It is said that the fish of a certain river in Bœotia shine like gold so long as they are in their own waters, but take them thence, and they become like common fish. Just so with afflictions ; if we lose sight of God's Will they press upon us with all their inherent bitterness, but he who looks at them beneath the light of God's Good Pleasure sees them glowing, gilt and precious.

Imagine what Abraham would have felt if called upon to kill his son apart from God's Will ! how fearful the struggle ! But as yielding to God's Good Pleasure he clasps the sorrow to his heart. How could the Martyrs have rejoiced amid the flames save for that stay ? The truly loving heart desires God's Good Pleasure, not in consolation only, but in affliction ; nay, more, his love is quickened amid toil and woe for the very reason that love delights to suffer on behalf of the object beloved.

The Stoics, of whom Epictetus is foremost, confined their philosophy to abstinence and endurance, to renouncing ease and worldly honour, and to bearing injury, toil, and trouble. But Christianity, the only

true philosophy, founds its practice upon three principles—self-abnegation, which is far higher than a mere abstinence from pleasure; carrying the Cross, which is higher than merely enduring it; and following our Lord, not merely in those respects, but, further, in the performance of all manner of good works. Yet even so love and self-abnegation are not so powerfully set forth in action as in suffering. Holy Scripture brings forth the Death and Passion of our Lord as the climax of His Love for us.

There are three degrees in that manner of love which we call submissive:—

I. Love of God's Will amid consolations is a worthy love, provided it be really God's Will we love, and not merely His consolations; but this love is easy, and needs no effort, for who could fail to love so acceptable a manifestation of God's Will?

II. Love of God's Will as set forth in His Commandments, His Counsels, and inspirations, is a higher degree of love, inasmuch as it requires us to renounce our own will, and to abstain from certain enjoyments not necessarily unlawful in themselves.

III. Love of suffering and trial for God's Sake is the highest point, since therein no attraction can be found save that such troubles are His Will. Such love implies victory over natural inclination, for it means more than enjoyments renounced, it implies a voluntary acceptance of toil and pain.

The great enemy of souls was keenly alive to this fact when, God having Himself declared Job to be "a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil,"¹ he counted that as light when weighed in the balance of the sufferings he obtained leave to shower upon the patriarch as a test—loss of property, loss of his children, the forsaking of friends, and bodily disease of the most loathsome kind. Yet under all this accumulation of woe Job was able to say, "What, shall we receive good at the Hand of God,

¹ Job i. 8.

and shall we not receive evil?"* Words full, indeed, of mighty love! and indicating that Job had learned to value the good things he received, not only because they were good intrinsically, but because they came from God's Hand. And on the same principle, looking to God's Hand, he could accept even afflictions thankfully, because they too come from that All-loving Source. We are all ready to accept what is good, but true love alone can accept evil thankfully, out of reverence to the Hand which inflicts it. The traveller who is uncertain of his road walks hesitatingly, and perpetually stops to make sure that he is not going astray; but he who knows his way thoroughly journeys on briskly and fearlessly. Even so love which seeks God's Will amid consolations treads cautiously, for fear of substituting self-pleasing for God's Pleasure; but that love which toils on amid troubles is free and bold, for no sorrow "but seemeth grievous" in itself, and it can only be welcomed for His Sake Who sends it.

As hounds are apt to be at fault in springtide, and continually lose scent because the fresh vegetation around overpowers the scent of the game; so amid the springtime of consolation love is prone to lose sight of God's Good Pleasure, being distracted by the sweet savour of delight. Our Lord having offered S. Catherine of Sienna her choice between a crown of gold and one of thorns, she chose the latter, as in closer conformity with love. Willingness to suffer is a sure test of love, S. Angela di Foligni says; and S. Paul gloried only in the Cross, in infirmity, in persecution.

* Job ii. 10.

CHAPTER III.

The Union of our Will with that of God in Spiritual Trials by Resignation.

LOVE of the Cross enables men to undertake voluntary sufferings—watchings, fastings and hardness—to renounce honour and enjoyment ; and such love is acceptable to our Dear Lord. But far more acceptable is a patient, loving endurance of suffering out of reverence for the Hand Which sends it. And highest of all is that love which not only endures patiently, but actually welcomes the trials which are an expression of God's Will.

And herein assuredly the highest perfection of love is a simple acquiescence in spiritual trials. S. Angela di Foligno describes her interior trials, likening her soul to one hanging between life and death, hopeless of aid, unable to help himself, or even to cry out for help. It is so sometimes when the soul is so overwhelmed with inward trouble that its every faculty seems crushed, without any hope of relief. Then, like our Lord, the soul is "sore amazed and very heavy, even unto death," and it intreats that, if possible, the cup may pass away, one thing only being clear to it as it holds on to God's Good Pleasure, namely, that it desires above all "not my will, but Thine be done." And amid such tribulation the soul is so distraught that it is scarce conscious of its own resignation, or imagines it to be so feeble as hardly to be worthy God's acceptance. Such resignation cannot be joyous, it is in active opposition to all natural impulses. And then the heart seems so full it can scarce even pour forth such complaints as those of Job or Jeremiah ; yet still it accepts all God sends, if not joyfully, at least bravely, and with the strength of real love. And the more

desolate and destitute that love is under such trial, the more precious its steadfastness.

This conformity to God's Pleasure is practised by holy resignation, or by holy indifference. Resignation is an effort of submission : you would rather live than die, but God's Will is death, and you submit. You would fain live, if it pleased God, and you would fain have it God's Will that you should live. You are ready to die, but you would more gladly abide yet awhile on earth. Job has supplied you with a perfect act of resignation : "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the Name of the Lord." No fuller expression of patient resignation under suffering could be found.

CHAPTER IV.

The Union of our Will with that of God by Indifference.

RESIGNATION gives God's Will the preference, but nevertheless it cleaves to many things besides that Will. Herein indifference is higher than resignation, for it cleaves to nothing save for the love of that Will. Of course a heart in itself most truly indifferent may cleave to some earthly affection before it realises what God's Will is. When Eliezer first saw Rebecca, he saw that she was "fair to look upon," but he remained passive until God made known His Will concerning her ; but so soon as that was declared he hastened to give her golden ornaments. On the contrary, if Jacob had only sought alliance with Laban, according to his father Isaac's desire, in wooing Rachel he would have been equally content with Leah, who was no less Laban's daughter ; but his own wishes were implicated also, and he only accepted Leah as a matter of resignation. The indifferent heart

¹ Job i. 21.

is not thus. It recognises suffering, although uncomely like a Leah, to be the offspring of God's Good Pleasure, and loves it no less than what is more acceptable; nay, he may even cherish tribulation most, as altogether stamped with God's Will. If I am athirst for water, what care I whether it be given me in a golden vessel or a common glass, since both alike are filled with water? Nay, I would even prefer the less costly glass, wherein the water itself is more clearly seen. What matters it whether God's Will come before me in tribulation or consolation, if in both alike I seek nought save the exceeding beauty and sweetness of that Will?

What could be grander than the heroic spirit of indifference which led S. Paul to say, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."¹ Or S. Martin, who, following in the Apostle's steps, nearing his end, and greatly desiring to depart, yet was willing to labour on for his people so long as his Master willed to need him.² Saints like these, who saw Heaven standing open before them, and at the same time endless calls to labour on earth, were able to feel absolute indifference, and to desire nothing save the fulfilment of God's Will. Not even Paradise itself had greater attractions for them than this troublous world, so long as God's Will called them to the one rather than the other. Toil was a paradise to them while His Will was toil; Paradise had been no æisection while His Will was otherwise. Truly, they cotol say with David, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee."

The indifferent heart is as a ball of wax in God's Hands, ready to receive any impress at His Good

¹ Phil. i. 23.

² "Domine, si adhuc populo Tuo sum necessarius, non recuso laborem, fiat voluntas Tua."

Pleasure ; without choice, equally prepared to accept whatever is God's Will, clinging to nothing for its own sake, but only to that Will as set forth in outer things. And therefore among several degrees of His Will the soul which is filled with this love of indifference will choose at all risks that which is closest to God's Will. He wills both marriage and virginity ; but forasmuch as the latter is His more perfect Will, the indifferent heart turns to it, as we see in S. Paul's spiritual child S. Thekla, in S. Cecilia, S. Agatha, and many more. God wills the service of both rich and poor ; but He leans most to the side of the poor, and therefore the indifferent heart chooses that service. He wills moderation under prosperity, and patience amid tribulation ; the indifferent heart selects the latter, as nearest to His Will. In short, such a man has but one supreme end, God. Wheresoever he discerns Him, thither he is "drawn by the sweetness of His perfume ;" and where He is most to be found, there he lingers longest. He is drawn by God's Will as by a very precious cord, and, go where it may, he is ready to follow ; hell were sweeter to him with God's Will than Paradise without. And were such a thing conceivable, we might even say that he would choose his own eternal loss rather than his salvation were it more conformable to the Will of God.

CHAPTER. V.

Holy Indifference embraces all Things.

WE should seek to practise such indifference ^{in all} respect to all that concerns our natural life, such as health or sickness, beauty or deformity, strength or weakness, honour, rank, and riches ; so, also, in all fluctuations of the spiritual life, dryness, consolation, and the like. Job endured a loathsome disease ; he was despised by his dearest friends, he

was overwhelmed by mental troubles. S. Paul speaks of being "troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, in afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watchings, fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the Power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."¹ Yet amid all such tribulations the Apostles stood indifferent to all save God's Will, joyful in sorrow, rich in poverty, living in death, all alike to them, because alike was His Will. And forasmuch as patience is the promoter of all other virtues, S. Paul puts it foremost, as the token of a "minister of God."²

To pass to the highest example of all, it was the same with our Dear Lord Himself, both in His material and spiritual life; for although as God He never could lay aside His Eternal Glory, yet in His Love for man He laid that aside, and bore all the mental as well as bodily sufferings which appertain to that Manhood which He took upon Him.

"The form of a hand" appeared to Ezekiel, taking him up by a lock of his hair, and lifted him up between earth and heaven;³ and even so our Lord was raised upon the Cross between heaven and earth, held, so to say, by His Father's Hand, and yet there came the time when He uttered the exceeding bitter cry, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Tradition tells us of a certain fish called the sea lantern, which when storms run high lifts its brightly-shining tongue out from the water so as to become a

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 8, and vi. 4-10.

² 2 Cor. vi. 4.

³ Ezek. viii. 3.

torch to the wave-tossed ships around. Even so our Saviour, amid the tempest of His Passion, which shrouded every faculty, lifted up His bright, clear power of Soul, which even then could not be overwhelmed—His trust in His Father's Love : "Into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit;" and the faithful soul which cleaves to Him will ever find that resting-place, come what may of waves and storms upon his head.

CHAPTER VI.

The Practice of Loving Indifference in what concerns God's Own Service.

WE can only distinguish what is God's Good Pleasure by such results as are wrought by it ; and so long as these are not made plain, we must be content to abide as stedfastly as may be by what we do know. So soon as He vouchsafes to manifest His Will, it behoves us to accept it with loving submission.

Some one very dear to me, or I myself am laid low in sickness, and I know not whether it be God's Will to send death or recovery ; but I do know that while the issue is uncertain, He has signified His Will that all fitting means of cure be employed, therefore I am bound diligently to make use of all such. But if His Pleasure is that sickness prevail and death ensue, forthwith my higher mental faculties must freely accept the decree, notwithstanding the reluctance which my lower being may experience : "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy Sight."

But if God's Good Pleasure were revealed to me, as was the manner of his death to S. Peter, his bonds and imprisonment to S. Paul, the death of his child to David, the destruction of his beloved city to Jeremiah ; in such case our part is immediate union of our will with God's, after the example of Abraham, so that like him we may be ready even to sacrifice our son at

God's call. Happy the father who hesitated not at so great a sacrifice ! happy the son who so freely submitted to God's Will when the cost was his own life ! Yet more, see how absolute the union of Abraham's will with God's was ; for just as in obedience to the Divine command his hand was raised to slay his son, so a fresh manifestation by an Angel stayed the blow, he being alike ready to strike or not to strike. All things were as one to him, so long as he fulfilled God's Will.

In like manner God not unfrequently trains us in holy indifference by inspiring us with lofty designs, to which He does not grant success ; and in such case, just as we are bound to carry on the work bravely and heartily so long as we are able, so we are bound to acquiesce patiently in whatever issue God may appoint. S. Louis was inspired with a design to recover the Holy Land ; he was unsuccessful, and submitted to his failure. Surely his calm submission was even grander than his noble plan ? S. Francis went to Egypt to convert the infidel, or die a martyr's death in pursuit of God's Will ; but that Will was that he should return, having accomplished neither one nor the other. God willed S. Antony of Padua greatly to desire martyrdom, which He willed not to grant him. S. Ignatius, after founding his Company, foreseeing the great work it had done and should do for Christ, yet had courage to vow that if it should be dispersed, great as the trial would be to him, he would accept it as God's Will. S. John Avila had projected a Company for somewhat similar objects, but finding that he was forestalled by S. Ignatius, he stopped short at once without hesitation. Thrice blessed are such souls, ready boldly to carry out whatever God inspires, and equally ready to withdraw when He sends a check ! There can be no greater proof of a very perfect indifference than readiness to stop short in a good work when that course is plainly indicated as God's Will. Jonas thought he had good reason to murmur because the prophecy sent by him to Nineveh was not fulfilled.

He did God's bidding, but he consulted his own will as well as God's ; and consequently, when his prophecy was not carried out, he was angry, and complained. If he had had no other thought than God's Good Pleasure, he would have seen it as gladly in the remission of punishment as in its infliction on Nineveh. We are eager for success in all we do, and forget that God is supreme. If He willed to threaten but not to destroy Nineveh, what right had Jonah to complain ?

At this rate, you will say, we ought to hold to nothing, but leave everything to the course of events. Scarcely. We are bound to neglect nothing which can promote the success of whatever God bids us undertake ; but on condition that, should our endeavours not be prospered, we are patient and submissive. We are bidden earnestly to seek God's Glory in what is intrusted to us, but we are not responsible for the issue, which does not depend on us. S. Bernard points out that in the parable of the Good Samaritan it was said, "Take care of him," not, "Heal him." And so the Apostles diligently preached the Word to the Jews first ; albeit they knew prophetically that the soil was ungrateful, and that they would have to turn to the Gentiles. We may indeed plant and water, but God only gives the increase.

The Psalmist cries out in the spirit of prophecy to Christ, "Good luck have Thou with Thine Honour ; ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness. . . . Thy arrows are very sharp."¹ Thou, Lord, as a warrior, ridest forth, wielding the minds of Thy faithful ; they haste to do Thy Will, and when it seemeth Thee good, Thou stayest them in the midst of their course.

The question may arise, If the inspired undertaking fail through fault of those to whom it is intrusted, can we still say that it is God's Will, in which we must acquiesce ? Surely it then becomes our fault, not His Will, which is the hindering cause ? Truly, thy fault

¹ Ps. xlv. 5.

is not God's Will, He is not the Author of sin ; but it is His Will that thy fault be visited by failure, for while His Goodness cannot will thy fault, His Justice must needs will its penalty. God did not cause David to sin, but He inflicted the punishment that sin incurred ; He did not will Saul's sin, but He willed that defeat should follow on that sin. Whensoever, then, God's designs fail by reason of our fault, it is our part alike to abhor our sin in true repentance and to accept the penalty, ever remembering, that while the sin is contrary to God's Will, so the penalty is in conformity to that Will.

CHAPTER VII.

Holy Indifference as to Progress in Virtue.

IT is God's Will that we should do whatever lies in our power for the acquisition of all Christian virtues ; but we must needs remember that though we may plant and water, God only can give the increase, and therefore we must leave the fruit of our efforts to His Good Providence. So if we do not make such conscious progress in the spiritual life as we desire, there is no need to be disturbed and anxious ; better far it is to be calm, doing diligently all that depends upon ourselves, but leaving results to our Dear Lord. The labourer will be called to account for his careful cultivation, not for the abundance of his harvest. There is no need to be uneasy because we seem always like novices in holiness ; in the spiritual life every one counts us a novice to the end, and all life is a probation. There is no surer token that a man is not even a novice, but worthy only to be cast out altogether, than that he esteems himself to be fully professed. For in the Rule of that Order it is not the mere solemnisation, but the fulfilment, of the vows which makes a full

profession. And no vow is fulfilled so long as there remains anything to do in its observance, but the obligation to serve God and advance in His Love continues unceasingly so long as life lasts.

But, some one will say, if I know that it is through my own fault that I am kept back, how can I help being anxious and disturbed? It cannot be too often repeated, what we need is a steadfast, earnest repentance for past sins, but one free from excitement, restlessness, and discouragement. Do you realise that you are hindered in the right road by your own fault? Then humble yourself before God, ask His Mercy, confess your fault, and ask His forgiveness as proclaimed to you in absolution through your confessor. But having done this, be at rest, and while abhorring the sin, accept the humiliation of your conscious imperfection, and turn it to your soul's good.

Surely the souls in purgatory abhor their sins most earnestly, but they bear the time of waiting and purification before entering into Paradise in a loving spirit of humility, crying out, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and true is Thy Judgment!"¹ Be it ours patiently to seek spiritual progress, and instead of wasting time in fretting over the past, let us strive diligently to do better in future.

Here is a man who has earnestly longed and striven to conquer his temper, and God has blessed his endeavours, for He has delivered him from the various sins which proceed from indulged temper. He would die rather than utter a revengeful word, or yield to an impulse of hate. Yet he is still subject to sundry impulses of anger, to the quick wrath of an irritable temperament such as Holy Scripture deals with in the words, "Be ye angry, and sin not;" for anger must always be liable to stir up the heart where indignation, it may be righteous indignation, is kindled. But then the point is so to control such indignation as to be angry, yet without sinning in the utterance of our anger.

¹ Ps. cxix. 137.

But although these impulses and sensations are in no-wise sinful, the poor soul which experiences them is apt to be troubled and uneasy because of them, and moreover, often persuades itself that this uneasiness is God's dealing and chastisement. But it is not so; the Love of God is only wounded by sin, and this is the uneasiness of self-love, which would fain be free from the humiliation and struggle attending upon such angry impulses. It is not really the fault which troubles us in these emotions, for there is none; it is the effort of resistance which we dislike.

All such rebellion of the earthly nature, whether in anger or desire, is permitted to try us, that we may the rather exercise our spiritual courage in conquering it. It is the Philistine against whom the true Israelite is ever bound to fight without ever wholly destroying him. He may be enfeebled, he cannot be extirpated; he lives while we live, and only dies with us. He is to be abhorred, for he comes of sin, and always tends to sin. Even as we are taken out of the dust and return again to the dust, so the Apostle calls this rebellion sin because it comes of sin and tends thither; albeit we are not made guilty thereby, unless we yield to it: "His servants ye are to whom ye obey."¹ And again, he bids us beware that this manner of sin reign not in our mortal body, that we obey it in its lusts.² He does not forbid us to feel the impulses of sin, but only to consent thereto; he does not bid us hinder sin from attacking us, but he bids us beware that it reign not in us. Consent is the point; sin cannot reign where it is not consented to. The physician does not forbid his patient to be thirsty, that were idle folly; but he bids him abstain from drinking what is hurtful to his disease.

S. Paul himself was molested by "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan," which "buffeted" him, and he asked deliverance from God, Whose answer was, "My Grace is sufficient for thee," and the Apostle

¹ Rom. vi. 16.

² Rom. vi. 12.

goes on to say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."¹ Even in this chosen vessel natural rebellion struggled, and he could only deal with it as we must deal with ours, by prayer. Remember, too, that if our Lord suffers men to undergo such troubles, it is not necessarily as a punishment, but to set forth the power of His Divine Grace and Succour; and remember, also, that not only need we not be disturbed because of our temptations and infirmities, but we should, like S. Paul, "glory in infirmities," that God's Power may be seen in us, upholding us under them.

The Church has condemned the error of certain men who affirmed that it was possible to be absolutely free from the impulses of anger, lust, fear, and the like, in this life. It is God's Will that we should have foes, and that we resist them. It is our part bravely to accept His Will in both respects, enduring assault patiently, while stedfastly watching and resisting the assailants.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Union of our Will with that of God in His Sufferance of Sin.

GOD utterly abhors sin, yet in His Wisdom He suffers it in order to leave perfect free-will to His creatures, so that they who are able to offend by not offending may incur His greater favour. Be it ours to accept and bless the freedom He thus gives us; but forasmuch as while suffering sin He abhors it, let us strive to abhor it too, earnestly intreating that it be not committed, and using all available means to hinder its birth, progress, or triumph, even as our Dear Lord never ceases to teach, threaten, promise, forbid,

¹ 2 Cor. xii.

and command us in order to deter us from sin, without depriving us of free-will.

Or if sin has been actually committed, it is our duty to do whatever lies in our power to blot it out, remembering how our Lord revealed to one of His servants that He would even die anew to save a soul from sin. If the sinner persist, let us weep and pray for him, even as our Saviour wept, and shed His Blood. "I am horribly afraid," David says, "for the ungodly that forsake Thy Law;"¹ and S. Paul affirms that he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" because of the errors of his brethren.² However persistent sinners may be, it is our duty to persist in striving to win them, if so be that they may repent and be saved. Happy they who can say with S. Paul, "I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. . . . Wherefore I take you to record that I am pure from the blood of all men."³ So long as the slenderest hope of repentance exists, and that is so long as the sinner lives, it is our part to pray for him and succour him, never repulsing him.

But at last, when all has been done vainly, we have the example of our Lord and the Apostles to teach us how to act: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."⁴ "The Kingdom of God," our Saviour said, "shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."⁵ We may not lose the time that should serve to help others in fruitless mourning over those that will not be saved. The Apostle indeed speaks of his "continual sorrow," but he means only that he did not cease to regret the obstinacy of the Jews.

And furthermore, we are bound to love, worship, and praise God in His avenging Justice, even as in

¹ Ps. cxix. 53.

² Rom. ix. 2.

³ Acts xx. 26.

⁴ Acts xiii. 46.

⁵ Matt. xxi. 43.

His Mercy, both alike being His Attributes. Being as He is, All-good, He in His Grace wills us to be good ; in His Justice He chastens sin, which He abhors, as Supreme Goodness cannot but abhor evil. Remember that He never withdraws His Mercy save in the righteous vengeance of His Justice, as we never escape that strict Justice save by His Mercy, and whatever He does demands our submissive acceptance and worship. The righteous man praises God for such as are saved, and "rejoiceth to see His vengeance ;" the saints will accept His condemnation of sinners in the Last Judgment as well as the blessedness of the elect, and the angels beholding all things see that "He hath done all things well." It is ours to accept the Divine Will, and alike to kiss the right Hand of His Mercy and His left Hand of Justice.

CHAPTER IX.

*How to exercise Indifference even in what concerns
Holy Things.*

THERE was once a famous performer on the lute who became absolutely deaf, yet nevertheless, from long habit, was able still to sing and play upon his instrument ; but being unable to derive any pleasure from his performance, he ceased ever to sing or play save when the prince who had brought him up, and whom he greatly loved, desired it, gladly exercising his art on such occasions. Now it sometimes chanced that, the better to test his love, the prince would call upon him to play, and then would depart on other concerns ; yet the musician's desire to please his master was so strong that he would go on playing, although deriving no enjoyment himself either from the music or from the consciousness that the prince was listening. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart

is fixed : I will sing, and give praise. Awake up, in glory ; awake, lute and harp."¹

Now the heart of man is the performer of all songs of praise, and he is himself the harp or lute. For the most part, he takes pleasure in his own melody, for the loving heart rejoices in the love of God, even as the newly-fledged nightingales begin to chirp out of mere imitation, but as they grow they warble for very delight. So the heart begins with a feeble love from duty, but gradually realising what Divine Love is, it takes a fervent delight therein. And so by degrees there is a danger lest a man delight more in his own pleasure than in pleasing God ; lest he seek God less because it is His due, than for his own content therein. So then the musician raises his melody for his own sake, and to please his own ear, rather than God's Ear ; for the gratification he derives, more than for God's Glory.

CHAPTER X.

How to test the Reality of this Holy Love.

IF the songster sing to please God only, he will select that song which he knows to be most acceptable to Divine Providence ; but if he sing for his own satisfaction, that will be less the aim than the melody which best pleases himself. Of two duties, both alike acceptable to God, it may easily happen that we select one for God's Sake, or the other for our own. Rachel and Leah were alike Jacob's wives, but he loved the one merely because she had become his wife, the other for her own sweet sake. The song may be Divine, but it may be sung for the sake of the spiritual delight we receive thereby.

Take the case of a Bishop, whose mission it is to exercise his pastoral charge amid his own people, the

¹ Ps. lvi. 8, 9.

His charge first committed to S. Peter, "Feed My sheep;" and suppose him to plead that at Rome or Paris he finds greater spiritual advantages, and a more acceptable sphere of work. Surely he is seeking to exercise his holy office for his own sake, not that of God. The religious who neglects his own duties for those of a secular priest, or the married persons who seek to live as though they were religious in order to serve God better, as they say, may be assured that it is self they are really seeking to please.

God disposes of sickness as well as health; and if a man says that he desires health only that he may be better able to serve God, he deceives himself—he is seeking health in the Will of God, not the Will of God in health. It is hard to look long at a mirror without looking at one's own image reflected therein, and that, too, with satisfaction; but there is a wide difference between the pleasure taken in looking at the mirror because it is beautiful, or because one likes to see one's self therein. So it is doubtless hard to love God without resting in the personal satisfaction of such love; but there is a very distinct difference between the satisfaction felt in loving God because of His Perfection, and because of our own personal delight. And the Christian should aim as far as possible at loving God for Himself, and not merely in so far as He ministers to His creature's satisfaction. He who is conscious how he is praying, is not altogether rapt in prayer, for his attention is distracted from God Whom he addresses to the form in which he prays, and it not unfrequently happens that our anxiety to avoid distractions becomes itself the worst distraction of all. Nothing is so important in things spiritual as simplicity. When you seek to contemplate God, give yourself up so to do; if you are perpetually investigating your own mental attitude, you contemplate yourself instead of Him. He who prays fervently is scarce aware of it, for he is not thinking about his own prayer, but about God to Whom he prays; so he who

loves fervently does not weigh and measure his love, but is altogether absorbed in the Divine Object of his love. The spiritual songster is so anxious to please God that he gives no heed to his own melody save in so far as pleases Him.

Otherwise, so soon as the sweetness of prayer intermits (as it is sure to do sooner or later), and dryness supervenes, he who was so warm will grow slack and cold. Yet God is no less the Object of prayer than before? No, but that man was seeking his own consolation, not the God of consolations. These are souls which, like children, suck the honey off their bread and then throw that away; they care far more for the sweetness than the love, and readily turn away from God's Love when it is not mingled with their own gratification. Verily, such men are exposed to a great risk, either of falling away when spiritual sweetness fails them, or of mistaking their true bliss, and accepting the false for the true.

CHAPTER XL.

The Trouble of a Loving Heart which knows not whether it is pleasing to the Beloved.

THAT musician before mentioned had no enjoyment in his music after he became deaf save that of seeing that his prince cared for it. And blessed indeed is the heart which loves purely to please God without any intermingling of self-seeking. Yet this pleasure in pleasing God is not, strictly speaking, Divine Love, but one of its fruits, which may be separated as we separate a fruit from the tree which bare it, even as the deaf musician, who sang on, incapable of himself enjoying his music, and often deprived of the pleasure of actively pleasing his prince, when the latter left him alone.

So long, my God, as I behold Thy Gracious Counte-

nance accepting my love, what can exceed my bliss? But when Thou hidest it, and I am no longer conscious of Thy acceptance, verily, my soul is sore troubled; yet none the less will I love Thee still, and cease not in my song of praise, not for the pleasure which fails me, but for pure love of Thy Will.

A sick child will take the nourishment it loathes to please its mother; but supposing some such child to take that food from some stranger's hand merely because its mother sent it, the love shown would be greater. Watching, toil, and hardship become easy beneath the eye of some one we greatly love for whom they are borne; but it is hard to slave for an unconscious or indifferent master, and in such case love must needs be strong indeed to bear on without any encouragement.

So at times we have no delight in our devotional exercises, not even hearing our own voices, but rather distracted by the tumult which the Enemy raises to disturb us, and his suggestions that we are unacceptable to our Master, our love unprofitable. At such seasons, realising no gain to ourselves, no satisfaction to Him, our toil indeed is hard.

To increase the evil, it may be that the highest reasoning power of the soul fails to help, being itself overpowered and disheartened, so that even hope seems lost. Faith may promise that there will be an end to our troubles, and that rest will come; but its whispers are for the time wellnigh drowned, and the soul questions whether it can ever again be happy? At such a time nothing can help save a boundless trust in the Saviour, serving Him out of love of His Will; not merely amid the absence of satisfaction, but amid sorrow, desolation, dryness, and fear, even as His Blessed Mother and S. John did during His Passion, watching Him on Calvary when no ray of light or hope appeared, when on all sides, natural and spiritual, nought save darkness and terror surrounded them.

CHAPTER XII.

Amin such Interior Trials the Soul cannot realise its own Love of God, or the Spiritual Death that Self-will is undergoing.

WHEN S. Peter was on the eve of martyrdom, the Angel of God came, filling his prison with light, and, waking the Apostle, bade him rise up and take his garments, and led him without the city into freedom. S. Peter, though perfectly awake, did not suppose that what the Angel did was real, but thought he saw a vision. He was awake, but did not know himself to be so. He had put on his garments without knowing it; he was delivered, and did not believe it, and that because the deliverance was so marvellous that it absorbed his mind to the point of making him unable to realise the verity of all he did. And while he clearly saw the Angel, he took him for a vision, and therefore he was unable to derive any joy from his deliverance until at last "he came to himself," and burst forth with the cry, "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His Angel, and hath delivered me."¹

Now the case of a soul heavily burdened with inward trouble is somewhat parallel; for while fully able to believe, hope in, and love God, and practically doing so, it is not uncommonly too feeble to perceive that it is so. Trouble so possesses the soul that it is unable to investigate its own condition, and it imagines itself the victim of mere phantom virtues, instead of the abiding realities. Any violent passion is apt to produce this effect, and when subject to it men act as though in a dream, and cannot believe that their surroundings are real and tangible. Thus the Psalmist describes the overflowing delight of the Jews

¹ Acts xii.

on their return from the Babylonish captivity by saying, "Then were we like unto them that dream,"¹ or, as it is in the Vulgate, "as consoled."² They were so overwhelmed by the greatness of the deliverance that they could not believe it to be more than a dream. So the soul which is distraught by spiritual trials experiences a very pure, unalloyed love; for, being deprived of all joy in its union with God, it is bound to Him in heart and will without any intervening circumstances. The poor suffering soul looks around, and believing itself to be loveless, feels forsaken. There are no signs of love visible to it in outer things, and the imagination and reason are harassed by endless vague fears. Then the soul seeks for Divine Love in its higher mental region; and though, verily, love is there, it is so veiled amid darkness and sadness that the seeker perceives it not, or rather beholds without realizing, "like unto them that dream." It was in such a mental phase that Magdalene, meeting her Lord in the garden after His Resurrection, knew Him not, but supposed Him to be the gardener.

What can the soul do when in such straits? Nothing save give itself up unreservedly into God's Hands, even as our Dear Lord, Who, having drained the bitter Cup set before Him to the dregs, cried out, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit," His last crowning token of boundless Love of the Father. So when all things fail us, and our troubles have reached their climax, we must take refuge in this thorough resignation of self into His Hands Who can never fail. The Son commended His Spirit into the Father's Hands, and we, prostrate, and unable to bear up any longer against our manifold spiritual trials, can but commend our spirit into His Hands Who is indeed our Father, and bowing the head in absolute submission to His Good Pleasure, resign our will wholly to His.

¹ Ps. cxxvi. 1.

² "Facti sumus sicut consoleti."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Will, once dead to Self, lives solely in God's Will.

THE French language uses a specially significant word in speaking of death and the dead, "*trépas*," "*trépasser*," thereby indicating that death is but a passage from one life to the other, and that death is but "overstepping" the limits of this mortal life into that of immortality. The will can no more die than the soul, but it can overstep the ordinary trammels of this life, and live solely in God's Will. And this it does when ceasing to will anything; it gives itself up unreservedly to God's Divine Providence, so mingling with His Will and Pleasure, that it ceases altogether to appear, and is "hidden with Jesus Christ in God," so that it "lives no more," but God's Will lives in it.

What becomes of the stars' light at sunrise? Assuredly it is not extinguished, but rather absorbed and overpowered by that all-powerful sunlight in which it is lost. Even so man's will when wholly given up to God; it is not extinguished, but so plunged and lost in God's Will that it is no more seen, and has no existence apart from Him.

Had S. Louis's devoted queen been asked, when following him to the East, whither she went, doubtless she would have replied, "Whither the king goes;" and were further inquiries made, she would have answered, "I care not so long as I am with him." "Have you no personal aim in the journey?" "None save to be with him—Egypt, Palestine, all are alike to me, if I may but rejoice in his presence. It is not I that go, I do but follow." The servant in attendance upon his master would not say that he was going hither or thither, but merely that he followed

his master, for he goes nowhere after his own, but according to his master's will. And so the will which is truly given up to God has no individuality, but only follows His Will. A man in a ship moves onward, not of his own spontaneous motion, but borne on by the movement of the vessel ; and so the heart which has given itself up to God's Good Pleasure is content to be carried along in that stream without any independent action. And then the heart ceases even to say, "Thy Will, not mine, be done," for there is no more will to resign ; but it says, "Lord, I commit my will into Thy Hands," implying that the very will is no longer an independent existence, but is merged in God's Providence. Herein we perceive that the simile of a servant following his master fails ; for although the journey is undertaken according to the master's will, his servants exercise their own will (albeit a subject will) in following him, so that as master and servant are two, so there are two wills concerned. But the will which is dead to itself to live in God becomes altogether transmuted and absorbed in His Will, like a child which has developed no power of choice or desire beyond its mother's breast, and which makes no effort to adapt itself to her will, because it is part and parcel of her, and is unconscious of any will apart from hers, on which it depends wholly.

The highest perfection to which any human will can attain is to be thus united to the Will of One Sovereign Good, like the Saint who said, "Thou, Lord, hast led me in Thy Will," as though he said that he had not exercised his own will in the way he went, but had simply given himself up to God's Guidance.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Death of the Will.

WE can easily believe that Our Lady rejoiced so greatly in bearing the Divine Babe in her arms, that she either felt no weariness, or else took pleasure therein; for if the traveller who bears a branch of the *Agnus castus* tree knows no weariness, how must it have been with her who bore the Very Lamb of God Himself? And surely if, as the Babe grew, she sometimes suffered Him to walk, leading His tottering steps, it was not but that she loved better to bear Him in her arms, though she sought to train Him to walk and go alone. And so we, like babes, as we are, of our Heavenly Father, go beside Him in two ways, first using our own will in conformity with His, holding His Hand by obedience to His heavenly designs, and following Him wheresoever He signifies it to be His Will that we go. Thus God has signified it to be His Will that I sanctify His Day of Rest. In that He wills this, He also wills that I should wish to do it, and for that I must exercise my own will in conformity with His. But there is a second way by which we go with our Lord without any will of our own, merely letting ourselves be carried, like a babe in its mother's arms, by a certain happy consent which may be called union, or more properly unity of our will with God's. And this manner of conformity to the Will of God is specially acceptable to Him, because the results of that Will proceed purely from His Providence, and we have no power over them. We can certainly desire that all things may happen according to His Will, and the desire is a good one; but we can also accept the results of His Heavenly Will and Pleasure in the simple tranquillity of an unquestioning will, which, laying aside all voluntary

action, is content to acquiesce in whatever God chooses to do in or with us.

Had the Holy Infant Jesus been asked as His Mother bore Him whither He went, would He not have said, "I go nowhere; My Mother bears Me, and I go whither she goes"? And had it been rejoined, "But at all events, Gracious Babe, it is Thy Will to be borne thus by Thy Mother?" He might have answered, "Nay, I exercise no will, I leave it to her to come and go as she pleases; I move with her movements, and will with her will. I have no volition beyond that of cleaving to her breast as a fruit hangs from the tree." "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, O Holy Child Jesus, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!" Our Blessed Lord had full exercise of His reasoning powers from the moment of His Conception, as had S. John Baptist from the day of the Visitation; yet although capable of willing for themselves, both the Redeemer and the Baptist submitted their wills in infancy to their parents, and gave themselves up to their care. This is what we ought to do, striving to be as wax in God's Hand; not trifling away our time in wishes and desires, but leaving all to God, to do as seemeth Him good: "Casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us." "All our care," both as to such matters as do not depend upon us, and as to things which we have power to will or not to will, for He will watch over all that concerns us, and do whatever is best.

Be it ours to bless God for whatever He does, saying with Job, "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord!" Lord, I will wish for nought; I will leave all to Thee, and bless Thee because of Thy Gracious Will. There is no exercise of will so safe as when we will to have no will save God's Good Pleasure, and to praise and bless Him for whatever it works in and for us.

CHAPTER XV.

The Best Course we can take, amid the Interior and Exterior Troubles of Life, when the Will is dead to Self.

UNQUESTIONABLY it is a most pious mental attitude to bless and thank God for all that His Providence may ordain ; but if, while leaving God to will and do whatever He pleases in us, we, indifferent to all surroundings, could devote our whole heart and mind to His Boundless Goodness and Mercy, blessing them, not merely in their appointed results, but intrinsically, this would assuredly be a higher spiritual exercise. During the siege of Rhodes a certain painter named Protogenes, who dwelt in the suburbs, continued to work so calmly and uninterruptedly, that, even while his life seemed hanging on a thread, he completed a *chef-d'œuvre* representing a satyr playing on the flute. Happy those souls who, come what may, cleave with undivided trust and love to God's Eternal Goodness ! The daughter of a famous physician fell ill, and amid her fever told her friends that she asked nothing save to leave all care for her treatment to her father, without anxiety as to her recovery, having an unbounded trust in his affection and his skill. So she laid passive in his hands, and who but must feel that such confidence was the surest proof of her love ? " Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."¹ Hast thou fallen into the net of adversity ? look not upon the peril, but look to Him Who will defend thee : " Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall nourish thee."² Wherefore shouldest thou trouble over the changes and chances of this world, since thou knowest not what it were best to desire, whereas God will not

¹ Ps. xxv. 14.

² Ps. lv. 23.

fail to send that which is fittest for thee without any intervention of thine? Wait calmly upon Him, and let His ever-blessed Will be sufficient for thee. It was said to S. Catherine of Sienna, "Think thou of Me, and I will think for thee."

It is difficult precisely to define the absolute indifference of the human will when once it is thus buried in God's Will; we can scarcely say that it acquiesces in that Will, because acquiescence is a voluntary act of consent on the soul's part. Neither can we say that it accepts or receives God's Will, because acceptance and reception are, so to say, passive actions, by which we take and embrace that which is sent. Neither can we say that it permits God's Will, for permission is an exercise of will, although it may be of a passive kind, which does nothing itself, but yields to what may happen. The most correct definition of an indifferent will is perhaps to say that it is in a state of simple, universal expectation, the rather that the attitude of waiting implies no action, but merely a disposition to receive whatever is sent. But this disposition, though passive, is altogether voluntary. When the events God appoints have occurred, expectation becomes consent or acquiescence; but beforehand it is simply waiting upon God, indifferent to whatever it may please Him to ordain.

The Prophet Isaiah, speaking in our Lord's Name, describes the perfection of a human will, as submitted to that of God, in the words, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear,"—*i.e.* hath made known to me the sufferings He wills me to bear,—"and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back."¹ What is meant by not turning back but a state of simple expectation, ready for whatever God may appoint, even as he goes on to say, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair"? So, again, when our Blessed Lord had offered His prayer of total resignation in the Garden of Olives, and had given

¹ Isa. l. 5.

Himself up into the hands of His enemies, He further gave up His Soul and His Will to His Father by perfect indifference. For although, that we might realise the intense bitterness of His Anguish, He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" that was in no degree inconsistent with the holy indifference which He displayed a few brief moments later in the solemn words, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Perfect Self-Renunciation of the Soul which is united to God's Will.

LET us dwell awhile upon our Dear Lord before Pilate, where for love of us He suffered the soldiers to strip and scourge Him; think upon His Death, His glorious Resurrection, and His reappearance for man's salvation and God's Glory. It was love which worked all this; and even so when love takes possession of a soul it strips that soul of all earthly longings and self-conceit, which cling as closely to our mental being as the skin to the bodily frame, till at length it is despoiled even as to the most lawful affections, such as spiritual consolation, or that delight which the devout soul naturally takes in religious exercises and the perfection of virtue. Then indeed the soul is prepared to say, "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"¹ "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." The Lord gave me many holy desires, the Lord has taken them away; blessed be the Name of the Lord! Yes, verily, that same Lord Who in our first beginnings taught us to long after all that is virtuous, and to practise it, He Himself later on deprives us of those

¹ Cant. v. 3.

very longings, in order that we may more calmly and simply cleave to nought save His Own Good Pleasure. Like as Judith had all her festal garments laid by, never wearing them during her widowhood till such time as God sent her forth to overcome Holofernes; so the Christian soul may be in possession of spiritual exercises and virtues which it has no right to practise unless God calls them forth. And as Judith always wore her mourning habit save on the one solemn occasion when God bade her resume her gorgeous attire, so it beseems us to abide meekly in the humiliation of our imperfections and weakness till such time as it may please Him to call us to the performance of some great thing.

But since it is not possible to remain long despoiled of all affections, S. Paul bids us "put on the new man," Jesus Christ; for, having renounced all, even holy desires and thoughts, while God wills it, we must put on new affections, which practically are but the same, only renewed in their nature and character, inasmuch as they now have reference solely to God, not to ourselves.

When Eliezer went forth to seek the bride God had prepared for his master's son, he took all manner of new raiment and ornaments for her; and so nothing old beseems the bride of Christ. The soul which has stripped itself of all old ties, "forgetting its own people and its father's house" for Him, must take new ties, no longer according to earthly considerations, but because the Heavenly Bridegroom has willed it so. Having laid aside the old clinging to spiritual consolations, to devout practices, to the exercise of virtues, even to progress in spiritual perfection, the soul must needs "be clothed" with new affections, no longer caring for all these graces and heavenly favours because they are an adornment and perfecting of self, but because thereby our Lord's Name is sanctified, His Kingdom increased, and His Will glorified.

Thus it was that S. Peter put on his garments in the

prison, not by his own choice, but at the Angel's bidding—his girdle, his sandals, and the rest of his raiment. Thus S. Paul exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"¹ *i.e.* "To what shall I cleave, seeing Thou hast put to death my own will?" Lord, let Thy Good Pleasure take its place: "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God."² Surely he who has left all for God ought to take nothing back save at God's bidding; he will but cherish his body that his soul may better serve God; he will seek only to promote the good of his neighbour and of his own soul; he will strive even to do right, not because he likes so to do, but because it is God's wish.

The Prophet Isaiah was bidden of God to go naked and barefoot,³ and he did so for a certain time, at the end of which, equally at God's bidding, he resumed his garments. Just so it behoves us to lay aside all affections, great and small, frequently examining our heart whether it be ready, like the prophet, to strip off all its raiment, and then again to take them up when charity commands; so that, having hung naked on the Cross with Christ, we may rise to the new life with Him. "Love is strong as death," to make us leave all; it is glorious as the resurrection, to clothe us with glory and honour.

¹ Acts ix. 6.

² Ps. cxliii. 10.

³ Isa. xx.

BOOK X.

THE COMMAND TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS.

CHAPTER I.

The Graciousness of this Precept.

MAN is the most perfect part of creation, the soul is the most perfect part of man, love is the perfection of the soul, and the perfection of love is the Love of God ; so that the Love of God may be defined as the end, the perfection of the universe. And this explains the pre-eminence of that which our Lord called "the first and great commandment." This commandment is as the sun, whence all other Divine laws and precepts, all Gospel counsels, borrow their light and importance. Everything is created for that Divine Love, and everything tends to it ; like a tree it bears all counsels and inspirations as its flowers, eternal life its fruit, and whatever is not tending to eternal love tends to eternal death. Verily, that is a "great commandment" the fulfilling of which extends to eternity, and is itself the condition of eternal life.

Consider how gracious this law is. Surely it had been no small thing if God had but permitted us to approach such love, without urgently enjoining it by so many precepts ! But that neither His exceeding Greatness nor our low estate, or any other excuse, might hinder our love to Him, He has made it a command. Apelles, when desperately in love with Compaspe, dared not give way to his affection because of

⁴ Matt. xxii. 38.

his rival Alexander ; but so soon as that rival yielded to him, he knew not whether to be most devoted to her who was ceded to him by the Emperor, or to the Emperor who had made so inestimable a concession. And verily, if we could but see it, our debt is infinite to Him Who not merely permits but commands our love. My God, whether is greatest, the Beauty which Thine infinite Goodness bids me love, or the Goodness which lays so gracious a precept on me ?

At the Last Great Day God will cause the lost to perceive plainly the beauty of His Countenance and the treasures of His Goodness, so that they will long intensely, though vainly, to approach His Love. But even as we sometimes see a woman die in childbirth, all her travail and pains being fruitless, so those hapless souls, while perceiving the exceeding Beauty of God, will yet be powerless to love that which they hitherto rejected ; and the spectacle which should kindle fervent love in the will must tend instead to profound misery, in the remembrance that all this they have lost, a remembrance profitless now, when the season of repentance is passed. And thus those that are lost will for ever be tormented by the knowledge of infinite happiness which they cannot share, infinite love, which, having rejected when it was within their reach, they now can never attain. Their thirst will be all the more cruel because they will remember that the fountain was once open to them ; and though they may not share the brightness of the vision granted to God's Elect, we know that they "shall see the Son of Man in His Glory," and realise as they behold it what they have lost. Supposing that God had laid restrictions on His Love, how earnestly all devout souls would have striven to be admitted to it, more earnestly than David strove for love of Michal,¹ or Jacob for Rachel. Those that are lost would reckon themselves saved could they hope ever to attain to the Love of God, and the blessed would count them-

¹ 1 Sam. xviii.

selves as lost were it possible for them ever to fall from it.

So great is this commandment, that could the Divine Will ever extend it to the lost they would be saved ; and the whole blessedness of Heaven depends upon it. Blessed for ever be He Who has made that whereon all His creatures' happiness depends to be their first and chiefest duty !

CHAPTER II.

*This Commandment is of Heaven, although it is
given to the Faithful on earth.*

IF "the Law is not made for a righteous man"¹ because he needs it not, but seeks to do God's Will from instinctive love, how much more must the saints in Heaven be exempt from all law, their rejoicing in the Supreme Goodness and Beauty of their Beloved being, as it were, a blessed necessity to them ! In Heaven we shall love God, not as bound thereto by the law, but irresistibly impelled and attracted by the joy with which His exceeding Loveliness fills us ; and then the power of precept will yield to the power of satisfaction, which is the climax and fulfilment of the command. The commandment laid on us in this mortal life prepares us for that fulness of satisfaction in eternity ; and it is an imperative law, and by its observance alone can the citizens of the Militant Jerusalem attain to the freedom of the triumphant City, the Heavenly Jerusalem. There our hearts will be free from passion, our soul purged from all distraction, our spirits loosed from trammels, our inclinations all good and holy, and like the four beasts we read of in the Revelation, the blessed ones will "serve God day and night." Who can conceive the joy and gladness of that ceaseless service, that perpetual rest ?

¹ 1 Tim. i. 9.

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House ; they will be always praising Thee."¹

But we may not aspire to such perfect love in this life ; neither heart, soul, spirit, or strength here are equal to it. We must be content to love with all the strength we have. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ;"² but when I become a perfected soul in Paradise, I shall be free from the shortcomings of childhood, and shall love God perfectly. Meanwhile, during our spiritual childhood, let us not fail to do whatever God has commanded. We can do it, and, moreover, it is not hard, for His Commandment is Love.

CHAPTER III.

*The Heart which is filled with Love of God will
love all else in Him.*

WHEN we say "all" we except nothing ; yet the man who has given himself wholly to God may none the less "be all things" to his parents, his king, his country, his family, and his friends, and this because the duty which he owes to the one need in nowise clash with that which concerns the rest.

It is by love that a man gives himself ; and the more he loves, the more entire the gift. So he who loves God's Goodness above all things gives himself wholly to God. And having thus given himself, nothing should prevail to draw his heart from God ; nor can any affection do so save such as is unlawful and contrary to God's Will. Sarah made no objection to Ishmael's being Isaac's companion until he mocked her son ;³ and God permits man to cherish other affections so long as they do not infringe on the reverence due to Him.

In Heaven God will give Himself wholly to us, even

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 4.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

³ Gen. xxi. 9.

as He is One and Undivided ; yet He will give Himself variously to the innumerable blessed ones around Him. And we shall give ourselves to Him in like manner, for we shall see Him Face to face¹ in all His Beauty, and love Him Heart to heart. Nevertheless all will not see with the same perception, or love with the same degree of intensity, but to each it will be "as it is prepared of the Father." All will be filled with the fulness of Divine Love, but the capacity of each will vary. All honey is sweet, but Narbonne honey is held to be more luscious and perfumed than any other kind. I do homage to my prince, and likewise to his officer, who is my superior ; but the homage is different in kind, albeit neither interferes with the other. Nor if in Heaven, where the precept "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" is perfectly fulfilled, diverse degrees of love are found, need we marvel to find the same on earth? Nor is it only that of those who love God heartily—some love Him more, some less ; the same man may at times increase wondrously in his power of love, so to say surpassing himself. The great painter Apelles varied in the beauty of his works, and while always studying to portray Alexander nobly, there were times when his efforts were more earnest and more successful than at others. Assuredly the Love of God is a saintly science in which we may advance, and the "latter end" should be more abundant than the beginning.

In the language of Holy Scripture, to do anything "with all the heart" simply means doing it wholly and unreservedly : "With my whole heart have I sought Thee ;" "I call with my whole heart ;" yet though we read that David, who spake thus, was "a man after God's Own Heart," we also read of Hezekiah that "after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."³ And again, it is written of Josiah that "there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart,

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12. ² Ps. cxix. 10, 145. ³ 2 Kings xviii. 5.

and with all his soul, and with all his might . . . neither after him arose there any like him."¹ All three loved God with their whole heart, yet not after the same manner, according to the sacred text, which says of each that "there was none like him." It is obvious that David's love itself varied greatly in degree, and that the "clean heart" which God "renewed in" him² was more fervently devoted to the Lord than his earlier heart and mind had been.

All true lovers are alike in this, that they give their hearts to God "with all their strength;" but they are unlike in that they all give that heart after their several degrees, more or less perfectly. One gives it in martyrdom, another in perpetual virginity, in poverty, in active service, in devotion to pastoral work; and while all do their best, some attain to more, some to less, eminent perfection.

Jacob was beloved of God,³ yet he himself says that he served Laban "with all his power"⁴ for love of Rachel. He served Laban and loved Rachel with all his might, and he served the Lord with all his might too, but nevertheless he did not love them alike. He loved God above all things, above himself; but he loved Rachel above all other women, and as himself. His love of God was supreme, his love of Rachel the highest possible wedded love, and the one was in nowise contrary to the other.

The value of our love of God, then, depends upon the pre-eminence of the motive which rules it, upon our loving Him as God. And one drop of this love is worth more than all other possible love of angels or men; and so long as it reigns in the heart it will produce a universal, unalterable, unreserved submission to and preference for God's Will above all else.

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 25.

³ Rom. ix. 13.

² Ps. li. 10.

⁴ Gen. xxxi. 6.

CHAPTER IV.

*Two Manners of Perfection of Love in this
Mortal Life.*

KING Solomon had many wives and concubines, according to Oriental custom, but he had one, called in the Canticles his dove, his only one, to whom all the rest bowed in homage.¹ And the various degrees which these women occupied in his palace may be taken as typical of the various degrees of perfection with which souls are destined to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Some there are yet novices in virtue, having only just shaken off the yoke of sin, and though firmly resolved to love God, still weak and unformed, so that sundry extraneous and dangerous affections mingle with their love for Him. And as the young phoenix, first rising from the ashes which gave it birth, can take but feeble flight with its half-fledged plumage, so these new-born souls, issuing from their penitential ashes, cannot as yet take full wing in holy love, being restrained, as they are, by a multitude of evil tendencies and habits formed by their past careless lives. They are indeed living souls, and kindled with true love, or they had not come out of sin; but their love as yet is young and frail, and, overshadowed by sundry other loves, it cannot bear fruit as though it were in sole possession of the heart.

Of such was the Prodigal son, when, forsaking the swine he tended, he came to his father, half-naked, and soiled by his contact with those unclean beasts. For what is it to forsake the swine but to leave off sin; and what is that ragged, foul state but the lingering of sinful desires and habits? But nevertheless the Prodigal possessed that life of the soul which is love, and like

¹ Cant. vi. 9.

the phoenix rising from its ashes, he came to a new life: "He was dead, and is alive again." Such souls are typified by the damsels spoken of in the Song of Solomon, who, drawn by the "savour of good ointments" of the Bridegroom, really love Him, but with a childish love, and are easily distracted by trifles and worldly pleasures. Such matters are not grievously opposed to God's Will, not being mortal sins; but neither are they in conformity to it, and they tend to neglect and forgetfulness of it.

Other souls there are, which, having made great progress in Divine Love, and having overcome their attachment to what is wrong and dangerous, are yet hampered by useless, harmful attachment to objects which claim a legitimate degree of love. For instance, it was God's Will that Adam should love Eve, but not that he should love her so excessively as to disobey God in order to please her, in doing which he was not guilty of loving an unlawful object, but of loving a lawful one unduly. Love of parents, friends, etc., is enjoined us by God Himself, but it ceases to be in conformity to His Will when carried to excess.

Attachment to a vocation, or to spiritual exercises, excellent in itself, may be carried to excess if these are preferred to obedience or to any greater good, or if the heart stops short in them, as though they were the end rather than the means towards our true end, God's Love. Those souls which give way to an inordinate affection for even such things as God wills them to love, may love Him above all things, but not *in* all things, since their affection is not grounded on the motives He sets before them; and herein they are like the newly-fledged phoenix, which is unable to sustain a prolonged flight, and often alights on the earth for rest. Such was the young man who, having kept the Commandments from his youth up, was guiltless of coveting other men's goods, but clung to his own with undue eagerness, so that when our Lord bade him sell all and give to the poor, he went away

sorrowful.¹ He loved nothing but what he had a right to love, only he loved it unduly. Such souls are far from deficient in love, but it is ill regulated; and while they are admitted to union with the Heavenly Solomon, it is not as true brides, because their undue affection for lawful things distracts them from loving all solely in Him and for Him.

CHAPTER V.

Two yet Higher Degrees of the Love of God above all else.

THERE are certain souls which only love that which is permitted of God, and which love such objects only as He permits. Happy souls indeed, who love their friends in God, and their foes for God! They love many others besides God, but nothing save in and for Him. They not only love Him above all things, but in all things, and all things in Him. And such as these are like the perfected phoenix, which is never seen save on the wing, or on the highest mountain-tops. Whatever else such souls love, God is first and foremost, and all other affections cluster round His Love as their centre. S. Luke tells us of one whom the Lord called to follow Him, who, cleaving more to his home than his Master, asked to go and take leave of his family, when our Lord warned him against such ill-regulated love, bidding him care most for the advancement of God's Kingdom.² Such are the souls which, by reason of their close union with the Bridegroom, share in His Glory, and reign as queens with Him. But beyond all these there is a yet higher degree of love, as seen in that "only one" who not only loves God above all things, and all things in Him, but who loves Him only in all else, so that He is the Sole Object of love. And forasmuch as that soul seeks

¹ Matt. xix. 16-22.

² Luke ix. 59-62.

Him only in all affections, it loves Him equally everywhere, independently of all except His Holy Will.

If Ahasuerus loves Esther only for herself, why should he love her more when adorned and perfumed than in her ordinary attire? If I love my Saviour for Himself alone, how should I not love Him as well on Calvary as on Mount Tabor, since it is He Himself I find on both? Wherefore should I not say of either, "It is good to be here"? I love the Infant Saviour sojourning in Egypt, although I love not Egypt; wherefore should I not love Him when banqueting with Simon the leper, without loving the banquet? And if I love Him amid the blasphemies poured on Him on the Cross, without loving these blasphemies, why should I not love Him amid Magdalene's perfumes, without cleaving to their sweet savour? The true sign of loving God in all things is when we love Him equally in all things, since, inasmuch as He is always the same, the inequality of our love must proceed from somewhat which is not God. This true Bride of whom we speak does not love her Lord more as Supreme Ruler of the universe than were He wholly apart from it; she is indifferent to all that is not Himself. Paradise itself were not Paradise without Him; and did He offer no such reward to love, this true Bride would love Him no less. He is as dear to her hanging on the Cross as glorified in Heaven. But souls which have attained to such perfect love are so few that they are spoken of as "the only one of her mother,"¹ *i.e.* of God's Providence; "the only dove," "the undefiled," perfect, because love identifies them with the Bridegroom, Who is Perfect: "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me."²

Surely none save the Blessed Virgin herself ever attained to the highest perfection of this love, but other souls have advanced so far in it as to deserve the title of queen, only dove, perfect in the Beloved. How can we but say so of David when crying out,

¹ Cant. vi. 9.

² Cant. vii. 10.

"Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee;"¹ or S. Paul, "Counting all things but dung, that I may win Christ;"² or saints such as Augustine, Bernard, the two Catherines, and other like, whose cry was, "My God and my All!" Rare and blessed souls, which all our earthly symbols fail to set forth, even the phoenix itself! Surely nought save the bird of paradise, which never alights on the earth, but ever floats in the sky, can be a fit type of these, who love no created object save in the Creator, and He in it. Their love (for love they do) finds God in His creation, and they love Him in the works of His Hands, even as the pearl-fisher, who, while he takes up the shell, takes it not for its own sake, but for the pearl it contains.

The Blessed Virgin alone was endowed with such love, unchanging, unutterable; no other can be stationary, but must needs be advancing or falling back. Those souls which are yet cumbered with many idle and perilous affections are often stimulated to a higher, purer love; and those which have attained to the more perfect standard are liable to drop, relax their hold through human imperfection, and to be guilty of serious venial sin, as we may perceive by the bitter dissensions which sometimes prevail even among God's true servants, nay, did occur among the very Apostles, who were not free from the like infirmities. But forasmuch as such souls ordinarily cleaved to God in real, pure love, we may not doubt that their love was perfect; for just as we see that though good trees may bear fruit which is worm-eaten or blighted, they never can bear poisonous fruit, so such saints may indeed be guilty of unprofitable, ill-judged, unseemly acts, but never of mortal sin. So we must acknowledge that the trees are good, albeit some of their fruit is bad. Even the "just man falleth seven times," but he "riseth up again."³

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 24.

² Phil. iii. 8.

³ Prov. xxiv. 16.

CHAPTER VI.

All who really love will alike love God above
all things.

VARIOUS as the degrees of love may be, there is nevertheless but one law of love which is binding alike in all, although it be so infinitely varied in its manner of fulfilment. Probably there are no two human souls on earth, no two angels in Heaven, possessing a precisely similar measure of love; and as "one star differeth from another star in glory," so among the blessed in the Resurrection each one will have "a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."¹ But amid this diversity let us examine what that degree of love is which is always unchangingly incumbent on all.

It strikes me as almost a providential circumstance that in the ordinary version of Holy Scripture authorised by the Council of Trent the precept of love is expressed by the word "dilection" rather than "love;" for whereas dilection is love, it is something more, *i.e.* a love combining choice and delight, as S. Thomas points out that its philology indicates. God's precept enjoins a supreme and select love, even as the Beloved is "the chiefest among ten thousand,"² a love which must overrule all other loves and passions. The love of God must needs be deeper seated in the heart than any other, overflowing the soul above all other affections, the most absorbing of every faculty and power. And forasmuch as thereby we choose God as the highest Object of our being, it may be rightly called the supreme choice of love, or the choice of supreme love.

There are various kinds of love, paternal, filial, social, dependent, each so adapted to its special object

¹ Rev. ii. 17.

² Cant. v. 10.

"Will cannot be appropriated to another. Fraternal love is not suitably bestowed on a parent, nor does a man love his wife after the fashion he loves his father, or his son as he loves his servant. Love varies, like honour. Supreme honour appertains to supreme excellence, supreme love to supreme goodness. The Love of God is without compare, because there is none good as He: "The Lord our God is One Lord, and thou shalt love Him with all thine heart," etc.¹ It is this supreme dilection or delight which raises Him above all other loves, and causes us to desire to please Him beyond all else. And whosoever loves God thus will devote his whole soul and strength to God, preferring His Grace to the whole world. Such supreme love is enjoined on all men severally and generally, as necessary to salvation.

CHAPTER VII.

Continuation of the same Subject.

A MAN does not always see plainly, save by the certainty of faith, whether he possesses this necessary love, but he will always find sufficient indications of it, of which the surest, perhaps, is to be seen when some strong creature love comes into collision with God's Will. Then, if a man is possessed by the love of God, it will not fail to assert its power over his will, not merely unrivalled, but solitary, checking and rejecting whatever might be opposed to His Will.

When the fallen angels rebelled against God, the Archangel Michael, the prince of the angels, cried out, "Who is as God?" and overthrew them, his very name signifying "Who is as God?" So when the things of this world draw us away, God's Love, if it prevail in the heart, comes to the contest like another S. Michael,

¹ Deut. vi. 4, 5.

and conquers the foe, crying out, "Who is as God?" What is there in creature love fit to attract the heart from the Sovereign Goodness of God?

When Joseph perceived that he could not please his mistress without sinning against his master, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"¹ God's Love supreme above all.

Sarah gave her handmaid Hagar to Abraham according to Oriental custom, and until Hagar began to despise Sarah he showed no special preference between them; but so soon as the two affections came into collision it was plain which he loved best. Divine Love permits us to entertain other affections, and up to a certain point it may not seem clear which is strongest in the heart; yet directly that any opposition arises between the two he who really loves God will unhesitatingly take His side, and subject all other love to His.

There is a wide difference, in things spiritual as in things natural, between outward show and real worth. One of Cleopatra's pearls was worth more than the weightiest of stones, however large. A monarch's glory I should call greater when won in the field, and better when won by powers of administration; drums and trumpets make the loudest sound, the harp and lute the sweeter melody. An ounce of incense will not cause so powerful an odour as a pound of musk, but it will be far sweeter and better.

You may see a mother so wrapt up in her babe that she seems to be capable of no other thought, even for her husband; but if it became a question of losing one or the other, it would soon appear that, albeit her maternal love was the tenderest and most demonstrative, the love of her husband was deeper and stronger. Even so when a man loves God truly he will give the preference to His Will in all things, he will leave all else to hold fast to God's Grace; and even if his heart ordinarily seem less moved by Divine

¹ Gen. xxxix. 9.

Love than by other affections, when occasion arises it will call forth a vigour of action worth all the rest. The rabbit breeds with a marvellous rapidity, whereas the elephant produces but one foal, but that one is worth more than all the other's progeny. So earthly affections may make a great show, but the one act of sacred love is so perfect as to exceed them all, for it means an unreserved preference of God above all creation.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wherein the Strength and Virtue of Sacred Love lie.

THE strength of this love of God may well be great, for it must exceed all affections, conquer all difficulties, and desire God's favour beyond all things, and that absolutely and unreservedly. I say this advisedly, because there are people who would give up property, fame, and life itself for our Lord's Sake, who nevertheless are not prepared to offer some special thing of much less importance to Him.

To illustrate my meaning by an example. In the time of the Emperors Valerian and Gallus two friends inhabited Antioch, who were so closely bound together as to count themselves brothers. At length, however, some difference marred this friendship, and as is wont in such a case, it turned to a bitter hatred, until after a while Nicephorus (who was a layman) confessed himself in the wrong, and made three several attempts at reconciliation, which attempts Sapricius the priest rejected scornfully, even when Nicephorus went so far as to cast himself at his feet and implore forgiveness. In course of time a sore persecution arose, in which Sapricius endured all manner of torments for the faith without flinching, and was finally condemned to die. Being led out to execution, Nicephorus ran to meet him, and prostrating himself before the

intended martyr, repeatedly intreated his pardon. But his intreaties were ignored by Sapricius. The very executioners marvelled, and asked why he was so foolish as thus to persist in asking the forgiveness of one just about to die? "Ye know not what I ask of him who thus confesses Christ Crucified," he answered, "but God knows." So he persisted till the very last moment, crying out, "Give, and it shall be given unto you!" But the hard heart was not melted, and Sapricius, who thus showed no mercy to his brother, lost the glorious palm of martyrdom, for, his courage failing, he cried out for delay, and finally offered to sacrifice to the heathen gods. Then Nicephorus with tears besought him not to forfeit the crown he had so nearly won; but Sapricius had forgotten the Divine words, "If thou bring thy gift before the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," and so his offering was rejected, and he lost his crown. But the meek Nicephorus, deeply moved at the sight, cried out that he was a Christian, and claimed the martyrdom which his friend rejected. So the one was set free and the other beheaded; all which befell February 7th, A.D. 260, as recorded by Metaphrastes. And we should do well to ponder how Sapricius, although he had manfully endured divers torments, and willingly offered his life, yet would not sacrifice his enmity towards Nicephorus as God willed him to do, and therefore failed thus miserably when the victory was all but won, thereby teaching us that it is not enough to love God more than life itself, unless we love Him wholly, and in all things whatsoever without reservation. True, our Lord has said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" yet of a truth, while this is the climax of love, there are many other seemingly easier, more ordinary actions which are essential to the perfection of a true love of God. How could

Sapricius dare to say that he loved God aright, when that love could not prevail over the hatred he felt for one of God's creatures? Verily, to die for Christ may be the greatest, but it is far from the only proof of love for God ; and he who affects that, to the exclusion of other acts, sets forth rather vanity than love. Love is never inconsistent ; but it were the height of inconsistency to pretend to please Him we love in great things, while indifferent to His Pleasure in smaller matters. How can he die for love of God who is not willing to live according to His Will ?

Theoretically, he who is ready to die for his friend would doubtless be ready to bear all else for him, inasmuch as he who regards not death might be supposed to be indifferent to all other matters ; but so perverse and inconsistent is man, that sometimes he would rather sacrifice life itself than his empty, foolish whims. When Agrippina was told that her son would one day be Emperor, but that being so he would kill her, she replied, "I heed it not, so long as he may but reign !" Cato and Cleopatra both chose death rather than to witness their enemies triumph in capturing them, and Lucretia killed herself sooner than seem guilty of a sin she had not committed. There are many men who would die for their friends, yet nevertheless would not live to serve them, or yield to their will. Some men would rather hazard life than fortune ; and while not a few are willing to risk that life for their friends, there are few that would sacrifice reputation for another.

CHAPTER IX.

Testimony of Holy Scripture to this Assertion.

FROM the first moment Jacob met Rachel by the well, the faithfulness and depth of his love for her knew no bounds. Seven weary years of service

he counted as nought for the great love he bore her; and having won her, he served yet seven more gladly as her further price, despising Leah for her sake, although God blessed his union with her more fruitfully than that with Rachel. Yet judging by the circumstances told in Holy Scripture of Rachel's bartering her husband's affections against Reuben's mandrakes, it would not seem that the strength of her affection at all equalled Jacob's. And surely in like manner we often make the most unworthy choice! S. Augustine took great pains to discover wherein the great attraction of those mandrakes lay, but came to the conclusion that, though fair to look at, they were poor tasteless things. And Pliny tells us that the surgeons of his time were wont to stupefy their patients with the juice of mandrakes before operating,¹ whence we may conclude that it is a plant which fascinates and dulls the senses and passions by sleep. Moreover, he who long inhales it becomes dumb; he who drinks too large a draught will die. What better type of worldly pomp, riches, and pleasures? They are fair to look on, but whoso tastes finds no satisfaction or delight; yet their perfume intoxicates and bewitches, and they who drink too freely are numbed and stupefied. Yet for such mandrakes, such mere phantasmagoria, men forsake the love of their Heavenly Master! How can we say that we love Him above all things, when we prefer such worldly vanities to His Grace?

Is it not a strange thing to behold David, who so nobly triumphed over hate and wrong, fall so lamentably before sensual temptations as to seduce Uriah's wife, and even to commit murder in pursuit of his passion? Who would not marvel to see S. Peter

¹ A curious anticipation of chloroform. The mandrake seems always to have been looked upon as a mysterious and bewitched plant, *e.g.* Shakespeare's—

“And shrieks like mandrakes' torn out of the earth,
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad.”

—*Romeo and Juliet*, Act iv. s. 3.

boldly defying the band of soldiers who came to seize his Master, alone of all the disciples drawing his sword upon them, yet a few hours later denying that Master for fear of a maidservant? Nor, if we remember how Adam and Eve rejected God's Grace for the sake of an apple, need it seem so strange a thing for Rachel to value the mandrakes more than Jacob's love.

It is the note of heresy that the heretic picks and chooses such articles of faith as it suits him to accept, ignoring the rest; whereas the Catholic accepts all alike without exception, because they are the faith of the Church. Just so with the principles of love. He is a heretic in Divine Love who chooses to obey some of God's Commandments, rejecting others. He Who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law,"¹ and that because thou dost not abstain from lust out of love of God, but for some motive of thine own. What should I say of one who told me he forbore to cut off my arm for the love he bare me, yet at the same time put out my eye, or pierced me with his sword? It is a first principle that good can only come from a perfect source, whereas evil may proceed from one which is but in part bad. Thus an act of real love must issue from a full, whole affection embracing all God's Commandments, and if we lack in love for any one of them our love is not real, nor the heart whence it springs true.

CHAPTER X.

We ought to love God far more than Ourselves.

ARISTOTLE has well said, that while goodness is always attractive, each man prefers his own virtue, and his love for others springs from that which

¹ James ii. 10.

he bears to himself. A philosopher who neither knew nor loved God could see no farther ; yet it is true that the love of God precedes all self-love, even in the natural tendency of the will, as was demonstrated in Book I.

Man's will is so entirely moulded and consecrated to goodness, that it follows in a natural sequence that when Infinite Goodness is plainly set before it that Goodness claims its supreme love. Thus the blessed are under a necessity, though not one of violence, to love God when they behold His Sovereign Beauty, as we learn from Holy Scripture speaking of the rivers of delight which make glad the City of God. But we poor mortals on earth are not so constrained to love Him, because we see Him not so clearly. In Heaven we shall behold Him Face to face, *i.e.* every one, according to his capacity, will gaze upon His Infinite Beauty, and be rapt in an extasy of love which we neither would nor could resist. But here the faint glimpses which reach us invite, without compelling, us to love Him more than self ; nay, rather, while possessing this holy inclination to love Him above all things, we have not strength to carry it out unless God grants us a supernatural supply of His most Holy Love.

Nevertheless it is true, that as the clear sight of the Divinity infallibly produces the need to love Him more than self, so the perception, or natural knowledge thereof, infallibly produces a tendency to the same. How should that will which is created to love what is good come ever so little face to Face with its Sovereign Good and not feel drawn to love it above all else ? Our will always is instinctively attracted to that which is most infinite, and the disproportion between the infinite and finite is so great, that when once we recognise the former we are irresistibly drawn to prefer it to all other love, even that which is selfish. And this attraction is the stronger in that we are more God's than our own, and cannot realise what He is and what we are without crying out, Lord, I am Thine only ; soul

will, affection, all is Thine, and reacheth only to Thee. Thou art my First Cause, my Last End ; without Thee I cannot exist, I must love Thee more than myself, since I am Thine and in Thee alone.

Were there any Sovereign Goodness of which we were independent, so long as it was possible to unite ourselves thereto by love, we should tend to love it more than ourselves, because such infinite sweetness would have more power to attract the will than all other things, ourselves included. Or, to suppose an impossibility, were there some Infinite Goodness wholly extraneous to us with which ultimate communication were possible, we should prize it more than ourselves, because, being infinite, its attractions would always have more power to win us than all that is conceivable besides. But this could not touch the will, only the desire, and therefore it would not produce real love, which implies union. I only speak of this somewhat metaphysical point with a view to certain visionaries who are apt to disturb themselves greatly with idle imaginations. We know that as rational men we must needs love God better than ourselves, and as true Christians we must obey this inclination. Be it ours to love Him Who is more to us than all the world, more than self can ever be, better than self or aught beside.

CHAPTER XI.

How the Love of God leads to the Love of our Neighbour.

GOD made man in His Own Image and Likeness, and in like manner He has given a precept of love between men which is also an image and likeness of Divine Love : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the

second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹ Wherefore do we love God? S. Bernard answers that the cause of our love for God is God Himself, He being the very Essence of all goodness. Why should we love ourselves? Because we are made in His Image; and forasmuch as all men share this privilege, we are bound to love all as ourselves, *i.e.* as living and sacred images of God. It is from this point of view that we behold our weak selves so closely and tenderly bound to God that He vouchsafes to call Himself our Father and us His children. It is through this that we are capable of union with Him, of receiving His Grace, and of becoming “partakers of the Divine Nature,”² as S. Peter says. And thus the same charity which produces acts of the love of God similarly produces acts of love to our neighbour. Like Jacob’s ladder, whereby the angels descended as well as ascended, one and the same dilection raises us to union with God, and brings us back to loving sympathy with men. And thus we love our neighbour because he is the image and likeness of God, created in order to be the object of Divine Goodness, to share in His Grace and Glory.

He, then, that loves his neighbour in charity loves God in man and man in God; he loves God alone for His Own Sake, and man for God’s Sake. When Tobias was led by the Angel Raphael to the house of Raguel, the latter, looking upon him, forthwith exclaimed, “How like is this young man to Tobit my cousin! And Raguel asked them, From whence are ye, brethren? To whom they said, We are of the sons of Nephthalim, which are captives in Nineve. Then he said to them, Do ye know Tobit our kinsman? And they said, We know him. Then said he, Is he in good health? And they said, He is both alive and in good health. And Tobias said, He is my father. Then Raguel leaped up, and kissed him, and wept, and blessed him, and said unto him, Thou art the son of an honest and good man.

¹ Matt. xxii. 37-39.

² 2 Peter i. 4.

But when he had heard that Tobit was blind, he was sorrowful, and wept. And likewise Edna his wife and Sara his daughter wept."¹

Before knowing who he was Raguel felt kindly towards Tobias, because of his likeness to his father ; and afterwards he blessed him, not for his own sake, but because he was "the son of an honest and good man."

And truly, when we remember that our neighbour is made in God's Image and Likeness, ought we not like Raguel to dwell upon that Likeness as a cause of love ; and that not for his own sake, but for the Sake of God, Who has vouchsafed to impart His Own Likeness to His creature, who is made in, for, and by Him? Nor does Divine Love merely enjoin the love of our neighbour, but actually produces it, and fills man's heart with it ; so that, even as man is God's Image and Likeness, all holy love of man for man is a true image and likeness of his love for God. Verily, this is a subject which calls for a work specially upon it, and this perfection of love for God combines a perfect love of our brethren.

CHAPTER XII.

How Love brings forth Zeal.

JUST as love ever seeks the welfare of the object beloved, rejoicing in it when present, seeking it when deficient ; so does it generate that aversion which shuns all evil which might befall the beloved object, and seeks to avert or conquer it. This warm love, intent on the welfare of its object, we call zeal, which is neither more nor less than ardent love. If that love be good, so is the zeal which it kindles ; if the love be perverted, so will the zeal be. Jealousy is a manner of zeal, the chief difference being, that whereas zeal considers nothing but the need of averting whatever

¹ Tobit viii.

might injure the beloved object, jealousy thinks most of hindering anything that can interfere with its individual satisfaction in that object.

When men bestow ardent love on earthly things—beauty, honour, rank, or riches—such zeal or ardent love is wont to degenerate into envy, because all such worldly concerns are so mean, low, personal, and finite, that the possession by one impairs the possession of another, and in proportion as they are divided among many there remains less for each. Or when a man passionately desires exclusive affection, his ardent zeal becomes jealousy, because our human frailty is inevitably beset with such imperfection that when friendship is shared among many there remains less for each. And so we cannot endure rivals; and if any appear, jealousy is at once kindled, which, albeit resembling envy, is yet a very different thing. Thus envy is always unjust, but jealousy may be just, if not excessive, as, *e.g.*, in married people, who have a right to object to any inroad upon their mutual affection. Again, envy repines at seeing another equally fortunate with itself, albeit one loses nothing thereby; but jealousy does not grudge another's good things, so long as they do not infringe upon our own rights, *e.g.*, the jealous man cares not whose affections his neighbour wins, provided his own love be not meddled with. There is no rivalry until he becomes doubtful whether the beloved object is not partly won; whatever he may have felt before was envy, not jealousy. Again, envy does not imply detraction of its object; on the contrary, we invest him with all the merits which we envy, but we despise the man of whom we are jealous, and esteem him as vile and fickle.

Jealousy springs from love, envy from a want thereof. Jealousy has special reference to love, but envy extends to all manner of temporal advantages. We may envy others for being loved, but in such a case the real exciting cause is not the love they win, but the advantages accruing from it. A courtier is

not often jealous of his rival's favour with their prince so long as that favour is not expressed in the shape of temporal gain, honour, or wealth.

CHAPTER XIII.

God is a Jealous God.

I THE Lord am a jealous God.”¹ “The Lord, Whose Name is Jealous.”² What manner of jealousy is this? At first sight it seems somewhat like the jealousy of husband and wife, for God would have us so wholly His as to belong to no one else. “No man can serve two masters.” He demands the whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. He calls Himself the Bridegroom of the Soul, and speaks of unfaithfulness to Himself as fornication and adultery. And inasmuch as He has the fullest right to such poor love as our unworthiness can offer, surely we had needs give Him all we have to offer. Supremely good, He has a claim to supremest love, and supreme love must be whole and undivided.

But this jealousy of God's is not sensual; it is a pure friendship, in which our interests, not His, are concerned. Our love is only valuable to Him for our sake, and He delights to impart His Love to men without receiving any benefit thereby. Hear His generous, tender jealousy as expressed in the words, “My people . . . have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”³ He complains not for His Own Sake; wherein is the Fountain of Living Water the worse if men draw not of its lifegiving stream? But He sorrows over His people, who forsake Him to their own destruction. Whatever is taken from man's love to God is man's own loss, and therefore He pleads earnestly for our love.

¹ Deut. v. 9.

² Exod. xxxiv. 14.

³ Jer. ii. 13.

"Set Me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm," the Heavenly Bridegroom says to the Bride.¹ Her heart, indeed, was full of love for Him; but in His holy jealousy He seeks to seal it up so that nothing be spread abroad, neither anything extraneous find admittance, for He can tolerate no rival—her love must be His, wholly and alone. And because He demands not only the heart and its affections, but the life and its actions, He will have His seal upon the arm, to pledge it absolutely in all its work to His service. Love, He goes on to say, is strong as death; for just as death forcibly separates the soul from everything, even the body itself, so love, when ardent, separates the soul from all other affections, and purges it of all impurities. And therefore love is not only strong as death, but "cruel as the grave," *i.e.* inexorable in punishing the wrong done by any share given to a rival, however slight. The meek dove becomes furious when his jealousy over his mate is roused. You may see him lighting near her, murmuring, cooing, and striking her with his wings when another bird has been near, albeit she has given him no cause to complain.

David, after being forgiven his grievous sin, in consequence of the fervent love shown in his penitence, was severely punished for what might seem to us the comparatively venial sin of numbering his people.² Nowhere do we find this jealousy more clearly and delicately defined than by S. Catherine of Genoa in speaking of the specialities of pure love. When perfect love is jealous, she says, it can bear no intrusion or participation, not even of God's Own Gifts; its very longing after Paradise is in order to be closer to His Goodness Who sets eternal bliss before it. Such love is a lamp wherein is nought save bright fire and flame, which no floods can drown,³ and they who abide steadfast with these lamps burning,⁴ experience the holy fear of a pure bride, not the shrinking fear of a faithless

¹ Cant. viii. 6.

³ Cant. viii. 7.

² 2 Sam. xxiv.

⁴ Luke xii. 35.

wife. Their fear is altogether diverse, S. Augustine says : the one fears her husband's absence, the other his presence ; the one dreads his departure, the other his appearance ; the one is jealous, by reason of her exceeding love, the other is not jealous, because she does not love ; the one fears punishment, the other fears nothing save any lack of love. Not that she really fears to be unloved, as they do who think only of themselves, but she fears lest she herself fail worthily to love Him Who can never receive His due meed of love from His creatures ; and thus her love is not selfish, but noble and generous, a love which flows on to those around. For if we love our neighbour as ourselves for God's Sake, we shall be jealous of Him also for God's Sake, even as we are jealous over ourselves, and in that spirit we should be ready to die for His Sake. But forasmuch as zeal is a very ardent passion, it needs to be wisely and cautiously dealt with, else it easily oversteps its due limits, and then zeal turns to anger, and lawful affection to unjustifiable passion. But to enter upon a complete analysis of zeal would carry me beyond my bounds, and I will only observe here that those who are zealously inclined will do well to consult those set over them in the Lord before they let their lives be moulded by zeal.

CHAPTER XIV.

Our Zeal or Jealousy for our Lord.

A CERTAIN painter, having been commissioned to draw a horse at full speed, represented him lying on his back with his legs in the air. When the person who had given the commission remonstrated, the artist reversed his picture, pointing out that thus the animal appeared to be at full speed. If you want to see of what sort your jealousy for God should be, reflect how far you are jealous over earthly matters,

and then reverse the picture, and you will discover what God requires for Himself.

Take as an illustration the light of the sun and of a little lamp. They who enjoy the sun's light are in no-wise envious or jealous of one another, for they know that there is enough for all, that one man's gain is no loss to another, and that each enjoys it as thoroughly as though no one else shared in the welcome rays. But when it comes to a little lamp, each man would fain appropriate the light to himself, and he who gets possession is envied by his fellows. Earthly advantages are so mean and poor that he who attains them must do so at the expense of other men ; even human affection is so frail that what is given to one is more or less taken from another, and so we are jealous and impatient of rivals or fellows.

God's Love is so boundless and beneficent that all creation may bask in its warmth without any one lessening the portion of another ; it is inexhaustible, although it fills the universe, and when all is full it is still whole and undiminished. The sun's rays light up that rose you gaze upon as though the millions of other flowers it expands did not exist, and God sheds His Love on the individual soul as though there were none other the work of His Hand, neither does the outpouring of His Love diminish its inexhaustible, infinite wellspring.¹

But wherein lies that jealous zeal which it behoves us to cherish for God ? First of all, in hating, shunning, hindering, and doing battle as far as lies in our power against whatever is in any way opposed to His Will, His Glory, or the sanctification of His Name : " It

¹ " Thou art as much His care as if beside

Nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth :

Thus sunbeams pour alike their glorious tide

To light up worlds, or wake an insect's mirth :

They shine and shine with unexhausted store—

Thou art thy Saviour's darling—seek no more."

—*Christian Year (Monday before Easter).*

grieveth me when I see the transgressors, because they keep not Thy law ;”¹ “As for lies, I hate and abhor them ;”² “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee, and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee ?”³ “Mine eyes gush out with water, because men keep not Thy law ;”⁴ “My zeal hath even consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words ;”⁵ “I would root out all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.”⁶ Such was zeal as David felt it. He not only grieved, but his grief consumed him ; he would fain root out whatever was displeasing to God. And in the same spirit of zeal Phinehas took a javelin and thrust through the Israelite and his companion in sin of whom we read in the Old Testament.⁷ And even such was the zeal for His Father’s House which led our Saviour Himself to drive out thence those who profaned it with their commerce.⁸

Next, godly zeal kindles an exceeding jealousy in us for the purity of other souls ; *e.g.* S. Paul telling the Church of Corinth, “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy ; for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”⁹ Even as Eliezer had been jealous over the purity of Rebecca when he was taking her to be his master’s bride, so S. Paul was jealous over his converts, not for his own sake, but for God’s Sake, on Whose behalf he dealt with them. For them his solicitude led him to say, “I die daily ;”¹⁰ and again, “Who is weak, and I am not weak ? who is offended, and I burn not ?”¹¹ Remember our Lord’s own illustration of the hen’s jealous care of her young. No animal is more timid till she is a mother ; but once let her have her brood to guard, and she becomes bold as a lion, with watchful eye and alert step mounting guard over them, and ready to fly at the most unequally-matched foe if they

¹ Ps. cxix. 158.² Ps. cxix. 163.³ Ps. cxxxix. 21.⁴ Ps. cxix. 136.⁵ Ps. cxix. 139.⁶ Ps. ci. 11.⁷ Num. xxv.⁸ John ii. 15.⁹ 2 Cor. xi. 2.¹⁰ 1 Cor. xv. 31.¹¹ 2 Cor. xi. 29.

are in peril. Such is the jealous zeal of parent for child, of pastor for his flock, of brother for brother. How jealous Jacob's sons were for the honour of their sister Dinah;¹ or Job, lest his children might have sinned;² or S. Paul for his kinsmen according to the flesh, on whose behalf he could even wish himself cast out;³ or Moses, asking that he might be blotted out of the Book of Life, if only his people might be forgiven!⁴

It is the characteristic of human jealousy to fear lest the object of its love fall into the possession of another; but the only dread of zeal for God is lest we ourselves be not sufficiently possessed by Him. Human jealousy fears lest it be not sufficiently loved; Christian jealousy fears lest its own love be not sufficient. In this spirit the Bride of the Canticles cries out, "Tell me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?"⁵ She fears lest the "companions" should in any way distract her, and is stedfastly minded that the pleasures and honours of the world should not absorb one particle of that love which she has wholly consecrated to her Beloved Lord and Saviour.

CHAPTER XV.

The Wise Guidance of Religious Zeal.

IN proportion to the loving warmth and vehemence of zeal, so is the need that it be wisely guided, else it will easily outstep the limits of discretion. Not, of course, that the love of God, however fervent, can ever be too strong in itself, or in the impulse it gives to the mind; but it is wont to call in the use of the intellect and the passions to effect its object, and these are

¹ Gen. xxxiv.

² Job i.

³ Rom. ix. 3.

⁴ Exod. xxxii. 32.

⁵ Cant. i. 7.

liable to act too vehemently, and so to hinder zeal, and make it unruly. We see an instance of this in Joab killing Absalom in spite of David's stringent orders to save his life.¹ In like manner zeal sometimes calls in the aid of anger, bidding it destroy the sin, yet spare the sinner; but passionate zeal, once roused, is like an unruly horse, who cannot be held by bit or bridle. So, again, the householder of whom our Lord tells² had to check the impetuous zeal of his servants, who would have rooted up the tares at the risk of rooting up the good grain also. Indignation is a strong, vigorous servant, capable of great things, but so eager and inconsiderate that it is wont to do more harm than good. Our peasants say that the peacock is a bad inmate, for although it will keep a place clear of spiders and the like, it spoils more than it saves. Anger is a natural reinforcement to reason, and grace uses it in support of zeal; but it is a dangerous ally, apt to get the upper hand and overthrow both reason and charity, and we are never safe or sure that it may not suddenly spread like a flame, and become destructive. It is indeed a desperate act to let a besieged city fall into the hands of one who may prove a master instead of an ally.

Self-love often deceives men, and disguises itself under the garb of zeal. Zeal has perhaps made some use of anger, and anger in its turn plays its own game under the name of zeal; under the name only, for, like all other virtues, the real thing itself cannot be used to any evil purpose.

A notorious sinner once cast himself at the feet of a holy priest, humbly seeking absolution, whereat a certain monk named Demophilus gave way to the fiercest indignation at the sight of such a penitent drawing so near the altar, and with blows and sharp words drove him thence, abusing the priest who would have received him, and removing the sacred vessels from the altar, which he held as desecrated. Demophilus proceeded next to write boastfully of what he

¹ 2 Sam. xviii.

² Matt. xiii.

had done to S. Denys the Areopagite, who answered him in a tone worthy of his teacher S. Paul, pointing out how indiscreet and unwise such zeal was, and illustrating his rebuke by the following instance. A Candidate Christian had been won back to Paganism by one of his former friends, whereupon a certain pious man, Carpus by name, who appears to have been bishop of Candia, was so moved to wrath that he prayed to God to destroy both with the thunderbolts of His wrath. But the Lord opened his eyes in a vision, and he beheld heaven open, and Jesus Christ sitting on His Throne, surrounded with angels, and beneath the yawning gulf, on the edge of which stood the two men he had wished to overwhelm, trembling with fear, while certain men stood by striving to thrust them in. So great was Carpus's wrath that, as he told S. Denys later on, he scarce cast a glance upon the Blessed Saviour and His company of angels, but gloated on the spectacle of those wretched men, whose fall he longed to hasten, till, raising his eyes, he beheld the All-pitying Saviour rise up and extend His Hand to those miserable beings, while the angels strove to draw them back. Then our Lord turned to Carpus, saying, "Smite Me rather, for gladly would I suffer anew to save men. Bethink thee whether thou wouldst choose to fall into that hellish gulf, or to abide with the angels." Some men think there can be no zeal without anger, whereas true zeal rarely if ever employs it. The surgeon never uses his knife save in extreme necessity, and holy zeal never uses anger save in a like extreme moral need.

CHAPTER XVI.

Concerning certain Saints whose Zealous Indignation is in nowise irreconcilable with the above.

WE read that Moses, Phinehas, Elijah, Mattathias, and other eminent servants of God, exercised a zealous wrath on sundry occasions; but then we must needs bear in mind that these were great men, who had full command over their anger, and knew how to control their passions, like the centurion in the Gospel, saying to one, "Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh."¹ But we are of a very different sort, and have not the same empire over ourselves; our steed is not so trained that we can "volt and revolt"² at pleasure. A well-broken retriever will follow the game or hold back as his master bids, but a young dog is disobedient, and strays. Those great saints, who have subdued their passions by dint of long-practised virtues, are able to wield their wrath at will; but we, with our unruly, ill-trained impulses, dare not let anger loose, lest, once at large, we know not how to restrain it. S. Denys tells Demophilus, above mentioned, that he who would correct others must first give good heed that his wrath do not gain the mastery over his better self, and that it is vain to cite Phinehas or Elijah as examples, for our Lord Himself checked a like spirit even in His disciples. We all remember the circumstances to which S. Denys alludes—how Phinehas slew the impure,³ and Elijah called down fire upon Ahaziah's soldiers, in token that the Lord was King.⁴ As also our Saviour's reply when James and John asked to be permitted to imitate Elijah, and destroy

¹ Matt. viii. 9.

³ Num. xxv.

² Terms of the *manège*.

⁴ 2 Kings i.

the Samaritan village which denied their Master entrance : "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,"¹ thereby teaching that His zeal was mild and gracious, never exercising fierce wrath save when all other possible means were unavailing.

When that great master of theology S. Thomas Aquinas lay in his last sickness at Fosse-neuve, the Cistercian monks around asked him to expound the Canticles to them, as S. Bernard had done. To which the Saint replied, "Dear fathers, give me the mind of S. Bernard, and I will expound the sacred words as he did!" Even so, if we poor weak Christians are called upon to put forth zealous wrath like those great saints we read of in the Scriptures, it behoves us to answer, "Give us their spirit and their light, and we will do as they did." It is not every one that knows when or how to be angry.

Those holy men were under God's immediate inspiration, and therefore they could exercise their wrath fearlessly, inasmuch as the same Spirit Which kindled restrained it within due limits. Such anger is not that "wrath of man" of which S. James says that it "worketh not the righteousness of God."² Although S. Paul calls the Galatians "foolish,"³ and withstood S. Peter "to the face,"⁴ is that any reason why we should sit in judgment on nations, censure and abuse our superiors? We are not so many S. Pauls ! But bitter, sharp, hasty men not unfrequently give way to their own tempers and dislikes under the cloak of zeal, and are consumed of their own fire, falsely calling it from heaven. On one side an ambitious man would fain have us believe that he only seeks the mitre out of zeal for souls ; on the other a harsh censor bids us accept his slanders and backbiting as the utterance of a zealous mind.

There are three forms which zeal may take : First, the vigorous action of justice in repressing evil ; and

¹ Luke ix. 55.

³ Gal. iii. 1.

² James i. 20.

⁴ Gal. ii. 11.

this appertains solely to those whose avowed office it is to censure and correct, but unfortunately a good many persons who have no right to such office assume it. Secondly, earnest zeal performs striking actions for the sake of example, to remedy evil, and the like, courses open alike to all, but which few care to pursue. And thirdly, a very admirable form of zeal lies in patience and endurance with a view to hindering evil, but scarce any one is found to exercise this. Ambitious zeal is more popular, and men do not let themselves see that it is a mere veil to intolerance, self-seeking, and anger.

Our Dear Lord's zeal was chiefly displayed in dying to conquer death and sin, wherein He was closely followed by His chosen vessel S. Paul, as S. Gregory Nazianzen well says, "He fights for all, prays for all, is jealous over all, burns for all; nay, more, for those who are his kinsmen in the flesh he could even wish himself accursed! O superabounding courage and zeal! fit copy of Christ, Who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows!" Even as our Lord bore the sins of the world, and died an accursed death for man, being all the while the Beloved Son of God, in Whom He was well pleased; so the Apostle was willing to bear all things, yet without ever willing to lose the Love of his Master, from which, he says, he knows nothing could ever separate him.¹ So, too, the Bride of the Canticles, affirming that love is strong as death, which separates body and soul, goes on to say that wrath (or jealousy) is cruel as the grave,² for it is like to hell, which separates the soul from the sight of God, but it is nowhere said that love or zeal in anywise resemble sin, which alone separates us from God's Grace. And indeed, how could ardent love desire such a separation, when love is very grace itself, or at least cannot exist without grace? We find a not unapt copy of S. Paul in S. Paulinus, who gave himself up to bondage in order to set another free.

¹ Rom. viii. 39.

² Cant. viii. 6.

Blessed is he, says S. Ambrose, who knows how to control zeal! And S. Bernard says that the devil will speedily mock a man's zeal if it be not according to knowledge. Zeal must be kindled of charity, governed by knowledge, strengthened by faith. True zeal is the offspring and life of charity, and like charity is patient, kind, peaceful, free from hatred or bitterness, "rejoicing in the truth."¹ The action of true zeal is like that of an ardent sportsman, who is diligent, careful, active, and very stedfast in the chase, but without fretfulness or passion, for that would only hinder his pursuit. So true zeal is ardent, but gentle, stedfast, painstaking, and indefatigable, while its false semblance is noisy, proud, fierce, quarrelsome, and unabiding.

CHAPTER XVII.

Our Lord's Life the Perfection of all Acts of Love.

TO sum up all that has been said concerning Divine Love. "The Love of Christ constraineth us;"² constraineth us by its infinite tenderness, exhibited throughout the work of our redemption, in which "the love and kindness of God our Saviour toward man appeared."³ What, indeed, was too much for that Great Lover of our souls to do?

I. He loved us with the love of complacency, for His "delights were with the children of men,"⁴ even becoming man Himself.

II. He loved us with the love of benevolence, humbling Himself to our human nature that that nature might be taken into God.

III. He formed so close and incomprehensible a union with man, that never was aught so closely

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

³ Tit. iii. 4.

² 2 Cor. v. 14.

⁴ Prov. viii. 31.

joined to humanity as the Godhead in the Person of the Son.

IV. He poured Himself into man, mingling His Greatness with our littleness, as a Fountain of living water, or the gracious dew of heaven.

V. His Love was extatic; not merely, as S. Denys says, because the very excess of His Loving-kindness took Him, so to say, out of Himself, but because, as S. Paul tells us, He annihilated Himself,¹ forsaking His Own Glory to take our humanity, and raise us to the position of joint-heirs with Him. And He of Whom it is so often written "I live"² vouchsafed to say that He lived in man³—His Life hidden with man's in God. He Who is all self-containing is contained by us; He Who from all eternity was in the Bosom of the Father as Man dwelt in the womb of an earthly mother; He Whose Life was Divine accepted a human life; He Who was eternally God became eternally man out of His exceeding Love of man.

VI. His Love, as instanced in the case of the Good Centurion and the Canaanite woman, was a Love of dilection.

VII. His Love for the young man who had kept all God's Commandments, and sought after perfection, was a Love of contemplation.

VIII. His Love when in the Virgin's womb, and during infancy, was the Love of quietude.

IX. The tenderness of His Love was shown when He took little children up in His Arms, towards Mary and Martha, over Lazarus's grave, and weeping over the city of Jerusalem.

X. His Zeal was set forth, as S. Denys says, in a

¹ Our version has "made Himself of no reputation" (Phil. ii. 7), but the original word is *ἐκένωσε*, rendered in the Vulgate by "exinanivit."

² What we render "As I live" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11), in the Vulgate is "VIVO EGO, dicit Dominus Deus."

³ Gal. ii. 20.

loving jealousy for man which led Him to offer His very Life to overcome His rival the devil.

XI. He testifies how He bore the languishing desires of love, saying, "I have a Baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"¹ Thus He longed for His Baptism of blood, urged by His exceeding desire for man's salvation; and His Sweat of blood proceeded from intense love as well as agony.

XII. Finally, that Great Lover of our souls died amid the flames of ardent love perfected in, by, for, and of love. For, albeit His bodily pains were enough to cause death to any man, it could not have overpowered Him Who "has the keys of hell and death"² if He had not Himself opened the door, His Love not being content to become mortal for us, but willing actually to die. He died of His Own deliberate choice, not of necessity: "No man taketh My Life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself."³ Isaiah tells us that He was offered because He willed it;⁴ and therefore Holy Scripture does not say that His Spirit left His Body as we are wont to speak, but that "He yielded up the Ghost"—He gave up His Spirit into His Father's Hands. S. Athanasius observes that He "bowed His Head"⁵ in order to express His acceptance of death, which else had not dared approach Him, "crying out with a loud voice" to testify that He had yet strength to live had He not so fervent a love for men that He willed to die, since otherwise men could not live eternally. This it was which made our Saviour's Death a true and perfect sacrifice, offered by Himself to His Father for our redemption. Those sufferings, which must needs have caused the death of any ordinary man, could not have caused His Death

¹ Luke xii. 50.

² Rev. i. 18.

³ John x. 18.

⁴ The passage, chap. liii. 7, which the English version renders "He was oppressed and afflicted," in the Vulgate is "Oblatus est quia ipse voluit."

⁵ As John records, chap. xix. 30.

had not the fire of His great Love consumed Him, so that He was at once the Sacrifice and the Sacrificer.

Yet we may not say that there was any extasy in this loving Death, for the object of that love had no charms by which He was rapt ; rather His Pure Soul welled forth like a precious myrrh which springs forth from its parent tree out of mere abundance and overflow, according to His words, "No man taketh My Life, but I lay it down of Myself."

What greater stimulant to love can any one of us need than the memory of what He has done for us ? Verily and indeed, the Love of Christ constraineth us !

BOOK XI.

THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF LOVE OVER ALL THE SOUL'S VIRTUES, ACTIONS, AND PERFECTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

All Virtues are acceptable to God.

GOODNESS in any garb is so pleasing to God, that even when found among heathen (who, as S. Augustine says, acted from purely lower motives, which produced friendship, temperance, honesty, etc.) He accepted and recompensed it. The Egyptian midwives who took pity on the Hebrews, and disobeyed Pharaoh's cruel command to slay their sons, were rewarded of God.¹ Because Nebuchadnezzar had "served a great service against Tyre" without wages, therefore the Lord gave him the land of Egypt,² whence S. Jerome draws the lesson that God rewards even heathen well-doing. And Daniel bade the King of Babylon "break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor."³ S. Paul says that "the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law."⁴ And if so, who can question that they do well, and will be remembered of God? The heathen recognised the sacredness of marriage; they held it right to bring up their children to love parents and country, and we may be sure that God, Who gave them this natural instinct, accepted its fulfilment.

¹ Exod. i.

³ Dan. iv. 27.

² Ezek. xxix. 19, 20.

⁴ Rom. ii. 14.

Natural reason is as a good tree planted by God ; and though its fruits may not be compared to the fruits of grace, still they are good, and receive their earthly reward of God, even as S. Augustine says the moral virtues of the Romans were rewarded by the spread and fame of their empire.

Sin is as a moral sickness, which hinders the mind in great things, but not in all action, even as the sick man sees, hears, and speaks, albeit sick. The soul yet lying in sin is capable of such natural good works as merit their natural reward, of such deeds as deserve recompense of their country and fellows. The sinner is not as devils, whose will is so wholly steeped in evil that it cannot frame aught that is good. Like the traveller who fell among thieves,¹ he lies half dead on the road leading to Jerusalem, and can make some feeble efforts in the right direction because he is but half dead ; yet he must surely perish at last, unless the Good Samaritan tend and save him. Man's natural reason is sorely wounded and left half dead by sin, and cannot of itself fulfil all those commandments which it is constrained to own as just. Knowing its duty, it cannot perform the things it knows, save here and there ; nor even so persistently without God's special help, for our spiritual enemy is ever on the watch to overthrow man, raising up countless temptations to disobey, and then nature apart from grace cannot fence off the precipice. He who is victorious conquers "through our Lord Jesus Christ."² If our Lord had said "Watch" only, we might think to be our own safeguard ; but inasmuch as He says "*Watch and pray*," He warns us that, "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."³

¹ Luke x. 30.

² 1 Cor. xv. 57.

³ Ps. cxxvii. 2.

CHAPTER II.

**Love endows Virtue with a Power of pleasing God
which by Nature it cannot have.**

IT has been observed that although the strawberry plant creeps along the ground exposed to the touch of insect and reptile, yet it never contracts any poisonous influence. So with man's natural virtues : though springing from a sin-stained, earthly heart, they are not necessarily sullied thereby. As Aristotle says, virtue is a habit which cannot be abused. But if such merely natural virtues are so good in themselves, how is it that they are unrewarded eternally in the sinner? Because he is incapable of an eternal reward who is separated from God, and the heavenly inheritance appertains to none save those who are "joint-heirs with Christ," nor can natural graces claim a supernatural reward. The virtues practised by those who are friends of God, though merely natural in their origin, become supernaturalised, and raised to holy works, through His operation in the heart of those who perform them. It is a note of friendship that it makes whatever a friend does acceptable ; it casts a glow over all his deeds—his sharp words are sweet, whereas a foe's sweet words are bitter. So all the good deeds of a heart which is devoted to God refer to Him ; for the heart which has given itself can surely withhold nought else, and he who offers the trees implies the offering of foliage and fruit also. "The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree, and shall spread abroad like a cedar in Libanus."¹ The good man is as "a tree planted by the water-side, that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither ; and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper."² Not the fruit of love and flowers of its special good works alone, but the

¹ Ps. xcii. 11.

² Ps. i. 3, 4.

very leaves of mere moral and natural virtues are influenced by the loving heart whence they spring. If when grafting a rose you insert a grain of musk, your roses will be scented hereafter. Rend your heart in penitence, and let God's Love enter the wound, and be sure your deeds will be perfumed with holiness.

The Spartans had a custom that if any evil man pronounced a wise counsel it should not be heeded until repeated by some one of repute ; and if you would sanctify the admirable moral teaching of Socrates or Epictetus, let it be carried out by a Christian soul for the love of God. "The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering;"¹ the offering taking its value in His Sight from the holiness of the offerer. And it is because He beholds His Beloved Son in all the children of His adoption that everything connected with them, materially and spiritually, is precious to Him. "Therefore, my beloved brethren," says S. Paul, "be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."² Remember, too, that all good works are "the work of the Lord," as we learn from the instance of Nebuchadnezzar and his army above cited ; and as Job, though born in a heathen land, was God's special servant, so too moral virtues, even in a sinner's heart, are God's work. But when these same virtues are found in the Christian, and lit up by love, then indeed are they "not in vain in the Lord," but fruitful and precious in His Sight. "With love," says S. Augustine, "all things profit ; without it nothing profits." And S. Paul tells us that "all things work together for good to them that love God."³

¹ Gen. iv. 4.

² 1 Cor. xv. 58.

³ Rom. viii. 28.

CHAPTER III.

Some Virtues achieve Higher Excellence than others by reason of the Presence of Divine Love.

CERTAIN virtues are much more capable through their natural tendency of receiving the blessed influences of holy love, and consequently of sharing in its dignity and worth. Chief among such are faith and hope, which, like charity, bear immediate reference to God ; and devotion, which, together with penitence, is a special offering to Him. These virtues so intrinsically tend to God, and are so susceptible to the impressions of His Love, that they need only the vehicle of a loving heart to give them a share in His Holiness. The vine which is planted between olive-trees needs no more to bear luscious grapes ; the mere neighbourhood results in a mutual interchange of properties, so great an adaptability exists between the plants. Almost all the flower creation rejoices in the sunshine, and expands beneath those life-giving rays. But above all, yellow flowers, and among them the sunflower chiefly, do even more, for they turn as the sun turns, looking towards it from dawn till sunset. Just so all virtues receive fresh beauty and worth from Divine Love ; but faith, hope, the fear of God, piety, penitence, and all other virtues which have special reference to Him, seek Him, and turn towards Him at all times with a more intense earnestness, as the sunflower turns to her God. Holy Scripture imputes a certain saving and sanctifying power to faith, hope, piety, the fear of God, and penitence, testifying that these are very precious virtues, and that where they exist in a heart filled with love of God they bear fruit and multiply. And surely the way in which love enhances all other virtues is clearly shown by S. Paul's

words, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."¹ Charity does not merely sanctify the heart wherein it dwells, but likewise every grace which enters therein with it, rendering all more precious in God's Sight, and above the rest faith, hope, and such virtues as have a natural tendency Godward. Therefore, before all else, it behoves us to cultivate the virtues of piety and reverence, of faith, hope, and holy fear, dwelling upon heavenly things, frequenting services and Sacraments, and the like, forasmuch as Divine Love is fostered by all such practices, and in its turn adds to their grace and merit.

CHAPTER IV.

Divine Love a Special Sanctifier of Obedience.

RACHEL, disappointed of her hopes of becoming a mother, gave Bilhah, her handmaid, to Jacob, saying, "Still I may also have children by her;"² but eventually she bore sons that were her very own, Joseph and Benjamin. And herein we find a type of holy love which, coming from Heaven to man, sometimes seems for a while to bear none of the expected fruit, and which then summons other virtues to its aid. But holy love will not long be barren, and in due time it brings forth an active love, which, like Joseph, rules over the kingdom of affections, passions, and faculties, subjecting all to God's Will, and therein fulfilling the precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength;" while it also bears a tender, Benjamin-like love, most sweet and attractive—unlike, however, in this, that its mother, charity, so far from dying at its birth, wins a fresh life therein.

Thus we must refer all good actions performed by

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

² Gen. xxx.

the children of God to holy love, either as its spontaneous fruit, or as springing from its influence.

A great general who has won an important battle unquestionably takes and deserves the credit thereof, both by reason of his personal prowess, and still more as having planned and disposed all the movements of his troops. If it so chanced that certain auxiliary bands unexpectedly strengthened his hands, that does not lessen his merit, as, though not under his special command, they did but fall in with his designs. But while he rightly receives the general glory of the victory, the several branches of his army none the less come in for their share of credit in detail; it is recorded how well the van or the guard behaved, how the French or Italians, the Germans or English fought, and even individuals whose valour has been conspicuous are mentioned. Even so the glory of our victory over hell, and our salvation, is all referred to Divine Love, which, as the general of our spiritual army, is the source of all those feats by which we win. It rules and guides all other gifts and graces as its troops, and if aught that is good is done seemingly independent of love, what is really excellent therein will serve the same end, and be accepted together with it. And while we say, speaking generally, that charity bears all, believes all, hopes all, and practically does all, yet we do not mean thereby to deny that other virtues tend greatly to promote the salvation of those who practise them, since we commonly speak of those who are "saved by faith," by almsgiving, prayer, etc. But meanwhile it is always understood, while we thus speak, that all such virtues have their real power and grace through Divine Love, whence all holiness proceeds.

When S. Paul says that charity "suffereth long, and is kind, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things," he unquestionably means that it is charity which teaches patience to endure, hope to look forward, and faith to believe, implying the additional fact

that none of these virtues would have any strength unless kindled and sustained by love. And this, again, is what S. Paul means when he says that without charity nothing "profiteth" him, *i.e.* that without love neither patience, kindness, hope, nor any other grace, can attain to that fervour and reality which God requires of His true servants.

CHAPTER V.

Divine Love enhances every other Virtue in proportion as it is infused into them.

PLINY describes a tree he saw at Tivoli on which was grafted all manner of fruits, one branch bearing cherries, another walnuts, figs, grapes, pomegranates, or apples. Wonderful as this seems, it is still more wondrous to see how all graces may be grafted upon Divine Love, so that, just as that tree might have been called a vine, or a cherry, or a pomegranate tree successively, so charity may be fitly described as patience, meekness, or justice.

But here the parallel fails us, for Pliny records that the unnatural strain upon its forces caused the tree to wither and die; whereas the more fruit love bears the stronger it grows. Its craving is insatiable, and, like Rachel, it is ever crying out, "Give me children, or else I die!"

Such as the graft is so will the fruit be, yet nevertheless the parent characteristic will be traced through every variety. And so the various graces developed in the Christian's life will all bear the trace of their common source, Holy Love, which will impart its own special charm to each, enhancing their original worth and beauty. The darkness of night veils the loveliness of the whole flower-world alike; but when the sun rises and sheds its glow upon that world anew, it does not alter their individual character, or make them

all bright alike. No sunshine gives the same colouring to the rose and the violet, or a similar height and dignity to the daisy and the lily. Yet supposing the sun to shine brightly on the violet while the rose was under a thick mist, it might perchance even seem the brightest flower. And if one man endures martyrdom and another the pangs of fasting with equal love, it is obvious that the reward of the one cannot be so great as the other, for martyrdom is intrinsically a greater offering than fasting, and love does but perfect its intrinsic excellence. All will admit that virginity is a higher grace than married chastity, or voluntary poverty than a mere good use of riches. And surely love combined with these graces can but confirm and enhance them in the souls it governs, even as fruits are made sweeter, without losing their natural flavour, by the sugar in which they are preserved.

The stronger love is, so much more perfect will be a man's good works; and as S. Paul says that it is possible even to suffer martyrdom without charity, we must all admit that it may be endured with but a low degree of love. And if so, be sure that an insignificant act performed in the strength of ardent love is worth more in God's Sight than even martyrdom itself where love is lacking. Thus the minor virtues of Our Lady, S. John, and other great saints, were of greater price before God than greater deeds of less worthy souls; and the passing acts of love of seraphim are more intense than the mightiest efforts of lower angelic beings, even as the scarce-formed notes of the nightingale are sweeter than all other songsters of our woods.

Pliny says that the great painter Piricius took in his old age to paint only small bits of still life; yet even these bore such marks of a master-hand that they sold at far higher prices than other men's best works. And so the small acts of humility which the great saints performed out of the abundance of their love were more acceptable to God than the mighty deeds which other men have effected with cold and loveless hearts.

The Bride of the Canticles pierced the Bridegroom's heart with one lock of her hair,¹ which he likens for its beauty to "a flock of goats that appear from Gilead;"² and having dwelt upon the beauty of her eyes, the noblest feature of the face, he turns at once to praise her hair, the least enduring of her beauties, as it were to show that the smallest grace is precious where love is.

CHAPTER VI.

The Exceeding Excellence which Love imparts to those Acts which spring either from itself or from other Virtues.

HAD not the Holy Spirit vouchsafed Himself to reveal in express terms through S. Paul how great worth holy love imparts to man's actions, we should not dare to imagine it. But listen to the Apostle's words: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."³ Affliction leading to glory, lightness producing weight, that which is momentary working for eternity! What is the virtue which works these wonders? Men call scarlet and purple a royal garb; but it is not by reason of the threads whence they are woven, but for the dye which tints them. So the good deeds of the Christian open Heaven to him; yet not because of the fabric which is of man, but by reason of the Precious Blood which dyes them. The branch verily bears its clusters of grapes, but only so long as it is united to the vine, so the Christian's virtues win eternal life only inasmuch as he is united to his Head, Which is Christ. Aaron's rod was dry until laid up in the Tabernacle,⁴ when in

¹ The "one chain of thy neck" of the English version (Cant. iv. 9) is "uno crine colli tui" in the Vulgate.

² Cant. vi. 5.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

⁴ Num. xvii. 8.

one night it brought forth flowers and fruit. So we are dry, worthless branches, "insufficient to think anything as of ourselves,"¹ until by the love of the Great "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls"² our hearts are fertilised, and bring forth fruits of life eternal. Steep the seeds of the common tasteless melon in perfumed water, and they will produce a highly-flavoured fruit. Even so we, who of ourselves cannot think anything that is good, may abound in good works meet for glory when our hearts are filled with love by God's Holy Spirit. The wretched thorns of our natural field will become as golden reeds meet for the Heavenly City³ through that; and the "measure of angels" will be given to men⁴ in the day when the Lord "cometh quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."⁵

Glorious reward, worthy of the Master we serve! Verily, had it so seemed Him good, He might well have demanded our obedient service without any hope of reward; for we are His bounden servants, and can do no good thing save through and in Him. But He has not so willed it; rather, for the sake of His Dear Son, He vouchsafes to treat with us, to offer us the wages of eternal life according to our temporal service. Not that this our service is anywise needful or profitable to Him—He Himself has taught us when we have done all to know that we are unprofitable servants,—but of His great Mercy He turns all we can do to our own advantage, and our petty good deeds win an eternal recompense.

Yet neither in this superabundant goodness does He fail to show forth His Wisdom, adhering as He does to a strict rule of justice, and, notwithstanding all His indulgence, keeping a true balance. For that which is lacking to our poverty is made up of His abundance, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

² 1 Pet. ii. 25,

³ Rev. xxi. 15.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 17.

⁵ Rev. xxii. 12.

by love, so admirably works in and for us, that those very deeds which seem most our own are still more His, since, while He produces them in us, we on our part produce them through Him ; He works for us, and we work for Him ; He co-operates with us, and on our part we co-operate with Him. We know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us if we be living members of Jesus Christ, Who has said, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."¹ And He has promised to be "a well of water springing up into everlasting life"² to whomsoever He indwelleth. Even so the "precious ointment upon the Head"—that is, Christ—runs down to all the faithful,³ and fulfils the promised blessing on them that "dwell together in unity" with Him.

Our feeble works, like the grain of mustard seed, cannot be compared with the tree of glory they produce, a result given to them through the agency of the Holy Spirit, Who, entering our heart, appropriates all we do, grafting us into the Heavenly Tree to which He supplies sap and life. And by means of our co-operation He suffers us to share in the merit and profit thereof, while we attribute to Him all the glory first and last, "being confident that He Which hath begun the good work will perform it to the end."⁴

Truly, it is a wondrous bargain, by which we give Him the frail glory of our praise, and He gives us eternal glory and joy ! So it is that by our light temporal affliction we attain the everlasting joys of eternity. Amen ; So be it.

¹ John xv. 5.

³ Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

² John iv. 14.

⁴ Phil. i. 6.

CHAPTER VII.

The Highest Virtues cannot exist apart.

IT is said that life is conveyed first of all members to the heart, by the union of the soul, and last to the eye, the reverse taking place in death, when the eye is the first member which loses its vitality, and the heart the last. The life which kindles the heart before birth is necessarily frail, but as the rest of the frame gradually develops, it becomes stronger; as again, when life declines, whichever member suffers, all the rest suffer with it. If a man injures his arm or leg his whole body feels the pain and discomfort; his countenance is changed by any anguish, internal or external, and this because the whole human frame is adapted to one purpose, each part fitting duly to the other.

It is much the same with our moral life. All the virtues cannot be attained at once, but rather one after another; as reason, which may be called the soul of our moral being, takes possession and direction, first of one, then of another passion. And for the most part this spiritual life begins in that which we may call the heart of the passions, namely love, which, spreading over all else, kindles them to life by contemplation; while moral or spiritual death enters through the eyes (gazing upon sin), as the Prophet says, "Death is come up into our windows,"¹ and so puts out love, whereupon our spiritual life is extinguished.

No doubt it is possible for some virtues to exist separately, but they will be frail and uncertain; because reason, which is the living principle of the soul, is never satisfied without possessing every faculty and passion, and if it is wounded in any one the whole

¹ Jer. ix. 21.

moral life is affected and fails. All virtues are such through their conformity to reason, and no act is really virtuous unless it arise from the heart's love for that which is beautiful and good. Such a love will always be influenced by reason, and thereby virtuous acts will be produced. If Jacob had loved Rachel only because she was Laban's daughter, why did he dislike Leah, who was no less Laban's child? But we know that he loved Rachel because of her beauty, and although Leah bare him children, he never cared in like manner for her. If a man loves one virtue through love of the reason and goodness he perceives in it, he will love all virtues, finding the same attraction in all. He who admires liberality, but cares not for chastity, proves that his admiration is not because of its intrinsic beauty, which is still more eminent in chastity, and we cannot help feeling that such a one's liberality is unreal, not springing from the true source whence all virtue must arise.

It is enough that a child be born in wedlock to entitle him to bear the name and rank of his parents, but he will not inherit their natural qualities unless he be born in lawful course. So our actions are attributed to reason, and bear the name of virtues; but if they spring from other and illegitimate motives they are worthless. What can the prudence of him who is intemperate and unjust be worth, inasmuch as he deliberately chooses vice and rejects virtue? Or how can a man be just who is not prudent, firm, and temperate, inasmuch as justice is neither more nor less than a strong, persistent determination to render to every one that which is his? The very science of administering justice is called *jurisprudence*; and surely he who cannot do justice to himself by temperance and purity is not likely to do justice to others. By the very word *virtue* we mean a property of the soul, just as we speak of the "virtue" of a plant, or of a precious stone. Prudence becomes imprudent in the intemperate; strength without prudence, justice,

and temperance, is mere violence ; justice becomes unjust in the coward, or in him who cannot distinguish between right and wrong. In short, no one virtue can exist in perfection without its concomitant virtues.

Of course all the virtues are not called for at once ; and indeed a man may be a saint without ever needing to exercise some kinds of virtue, *e.g.* S. Paul the first hermit, who in his wilderness had no occasion to practise forgiveness, meekness, or liberality. But, at the same time, such persons are so habitually guided by reason, that were the occasion to arise for any such virtues they would be ready to practise them without hesitation or reserve.

Men are liable to the mistake of accepting certain merely natural advantages as virtue, as in the case of people who are naturally sober, gentle, or pure ; but these qualities have no merit, any more than natural evil inclination constitutes vice, until they are voluntarily accepted and acted on. There is no merit in a small appetite, but abstinence on religious grounds is a virtue ; natural taciturnity has no virtue, but deliberate reticence of speech is different. Some people think that if they are free from a positive vice it is all the same as possessing its antagonistic virtue. He who never was in battle may certainly say that he never ran away, but that does not prove his valour ; he who has never suffered may boast of not being impatient, but he can scarce boast of his patience. Thus good inclinations are often mistaken for virtues ; and as it is quite possible to have some good inclinations without others, people suppose it to be the same with virtues.

In a letter written by S. Augustine to S. Ambrose, he shows that it is possible to possess some virtues apart after a feeble fashion, but that none can be carried to perfection by itself ; whereas one vice may exist alone, indeed it is not possible for all the vices to exist together, so that it does not follow that a man who has lost all virtues has acquired all vices. Nearly every virtue has two antagonistic vices which

are incompatible with each other. Thus the presumptuous man cannot at the same time be cowardly, and the prodigal cannot be a miser. Catilina was sober, and patient in bearing cold and hunger, and therefore he and his party boasted of his fortitude; but he was not prudent, inasmuch as he chose evil rather than good; he was not temperate, for he indulged in many vicious courses; he was not just, for he conspired against his country,—so that his fortitude dwindles down to mere obstinacy, and was simply an imposture.

CHAPTER VIII.

Charity comprehends all Virtues.

“**A** RIVER went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.”¹ Even so man is set in pleasant places, which are watered by the river of reason and natural light; and that river is separated into four heads—in other words, it flows in four different courses, according to the four faculties of the soul.

Thus, first, it influences the practical understanding, pointing out such actions as we ought to perform or shun, and natural light supplies prudence in the choice we have to make between good and evil.

Secondly, it sends forth justice to guide the will, *i.e.* a firm, continual resolution to render every man his due.

Thirdly, it supplies temperance to control the passions and lusts.

Fourthly, it bridles the impulses of anger.

These four rivers are further subdivided, to the better government of all human actions. But beyond all this, God has given a special favour to Christians, causing to well forth in the higher nature a supernatural fountain which we call grace, which, while really

¹ Gen. ii. 10.

proceeding of love, which purifies the soul of all sin, yet includes faith and hope, and which endows it with the utmost spiritual beauty. This sacred fountain imparts heavenly prudence to the understanding, holy justice to the will, temperance and devotion to the passions and impulses, thereby causing the heart of man to tend wholly to that purity and supernatural happiness which are only to be attained through union with God. When any of these streams of love come across one of the natural virtues they absorb it, mingling their own sweetness with it, as perfume imparts its savour to water; or if holy love does not meet with such natural virtues, it is able of itself to achieve the needful work.

For instance, love encountered many natural gifts in a Paul, an Ambrose, a Dionysius, a Pachomius, which were sanctified and turned to God's service; but in the multitude of others, such as the Magdalene, S. Mary of Egypt, or the Good Thief, where no natural gift appeared, love alone worked all that was needed, transforming itself into patience, gentleness, humility, and the like.

We sow many seeds, and bury all alike in the ground, until the sun, so to say, causes their resurrection, and each brings forth its flowers and fresh seed according to its kind, all of which, however diverse, are produced by the gracious warmth of the sun's rays. So God has sown the seeds of many virtues in man's heart; but they are so covered under the soil of weakness and imperfection that they are scarce perceived till such time as the vital heat of holy love awakens and revives them, causing them to bring forth all manner of graces. Like as the manna of the desert had every variety of pleasant flavour to the Israelites, so heavenly love possesses every manner of perfection, and brings it forth as needed. Joshua overcame God's enemies by his able generalship, but Samson overcame them more marvellously with his own hand. Joshua's strength lay in his troops, but

Samson's was personal. Heavenly love combines the two, for it wields and marshals the virtues already existing in the soul, such as faith, hope, or penitence, and supplies whatever is lacking itself more effectually than all besides.

S. Paul does not merely say that charity imparts patience, meekness, and the like, but that it is itself patient and meek ; and it is the special characteristic of the highest virtues in angels and men, that they not only move others, but act themselves. A Bishop confers Holy Orders, and commissions all those who exercise any ecclesiastical office, whether it be to preach or teach, to administer Sacraments, exorcise, etc. ; but he who confers the power on others is also able to exercise all such offices himself. So S. Thomas, alluding to the Apostle's words, "Charity suffereth long," etc., says charity is the sum and completion of all the other virtues. And S. Ambrose, writing to Demetrius, calls patience and the like members of charity ; while S. Augustine says that the Love of God comprises all virtues, and achieves all their results in man. "The division of virtues under four heads," he says, alluding to the cardinal virtues, "comes from the diverse affections arising from love. I should define these four virtues thus : Temperance, love giving itself wholly to God ; Fortitude, love willingly enduring all things for God ; Justice and Strength, serving God only, and thereby ruling whatever is subject to man uprightly ; Prudence, love selecting whatever may promote union with God, and rejecting all that can hinder it."

So he who has charity has a wedding garment, glorious, like Joseph's, in its divers colours, and glittering with all graces ; or, better still, he possesses a perfection which is the epitome of all perfections, of all virtues. And so "charity is kind ; envieth not," but is lowly ; "vaunteth not itself," but is humble ; "seeketh not her own," but is considerate ; "is not easily provoked," but peaceful ; "thinketh no evil," but is

generous; "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth;" "beareth all things, believeth all things" that are good, not arguing or contending; "hopeth all things" for a neighbour's salvation; "endureth all things." In a word, charity is that "gold tried in the fire" which our Lord counselled the Bishop of Laodicea to buy of Him,¹ which is worth all other riches, which is able to accomplish all things, which is our all in all.

CHAPTER IX.

All Virtues derive their Perfection from Holy Love.

"**L**OVE is the bond of perfectness,"² inasmuch as all spiritual perfection is combined therein, and without it there can neither be any combination of virtues, nor any single virtue in perfection. Without mortar to bind the stones a wall will soon fall; without nerves and tendons the body would perish; without love no virtue can abide. Our Lord always speaks of love as a necessary part of fulfilling His Commandments: "He that hath My Commandments, and keepeth them, He it is that loveth Me. . . . He that loveth Me not keepeth not My Commandments;"³ "Whoso keepeth His Word, in him is the love of God perfected;"⁴ "This is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments."⁵ And he who had all the virtues would necessarily keep all the Commandments, since he who has the virtue of religion will keep the three first, dutifulness observes the fourth, kindness the fifth, purity the sixth, generosity the seventh, truth the eighth, and honest regularity the ninth and tenth.⁶

¹ Rev. iii. 18.

² Col. iii. 14.

³ John xiv. 21, 24.

⁴ 1 John ii. 5.

⁵ 1 John ii. 3.

⁶ We have retained the division of the Commandments to which S. Francis was accustomed, which, as everybody knows, includes the two first Commandments as we divide them, under one head, and divides the tenth into two.

And if we cannot keep the Commandments without love, still less can we attain to all virtues without it.

It may be possible to have some virtue, and abstain awhile from offending God, even without His Love. But so we sometimes see an uprooted tree put forth frail, uncertain shoots ; and just as they will not come to maturity, so the natural good qualities of man's heart cannot come to any real perfection without love. Nor can the virtues apart from it achieve their rightful end, which is man's happiness. Any virtue taken without charity is little worth, because it cannot achieve the end of all virtues, man's happiness. The bee begins its existence as a mere grub, without legs or wings ; then it becomes a small fly, and at last, when full grown, it can both fly and make honey. So the virtues have a beginning, growth, and perfection ; they may possibly begin without the help of love, and even make some progress, but they can never advance to any perfection without charity, which wings their heavenward flight, and gathers in the honey of true sanctification.

What the sun is among the heavenly bodies such is charity among virtues, giving to each its brightness and beauty. Faith, hope, fear, and repentance may first possess the heart and make ready for charity, but it alone can kindle and quicken any or all.

Other virtues have great power to sustain and perfect one another, *e.g.* chastity both necessitates and confirms temperance ; obedience quickens prayer, humility, and generosity ; and by such intercommunication they enhance the value one of another. Thus chastity acquires a double worth through obedience to lawful authority ; and Aristotle says that the man who steals for some impure end is more guilty of impurity than of theft, the latter being merely the means to his end. So he who is chaste out of obedience is even more obedient than pure. But not even this combination of purity and obedience is perfect without love ; and were it possible to bring every

virtue together in one man, but without charity, he would resemble the inanimate body of Adam when God formed him out of the dust of the earth, without life, motion, or grace, until God "breathed into him the breath of life," and he "became a living soul."

Divine Love is so supreme, that while it is the perfection of all other virtues, it cannot itself be perfected of any, not even by obedience; for even the obedience of love acquires all its merit from His Goodness Whom we love. Truly loving we obey, as obeying we love; but the virtue of such obedience lies in His excellence Whose Love inspires us. God is at once the Final End as well as the First Cause of all that is good, and His Love is likewise the beginning and end of all perfection.

CHAPTER X.

The Heathen Virtues were very Imperfect.

THE philosophers of old spoke eloquently of moral virtue, and even of religion itself; but what Plutarch says of the Stoics may well be applied to all the heathen. "We see vessels," so he writes, "bearing most noble names—*Victory, Valour, The Sun*, etc., but they are none the less subject to the winds and waves; and the Stoics, who boast of being superior to all passions, fear, sorrow, or anger, are practically no less the victims of dismay, anxiety, impetuosity, and the like, than other men."

How could we look for any high degree of virtue in men who deliberately rejected the laws of religion? Seneca, for instance, wrote freely against all heathen superstitions; but that freedom, as S. Augustine observes, existed more in his words than deeds, since, while teaching men to reject superstition, inwardly he allowed their external observance: "The wise man will accept them out of obedience to the law, not as

acceptable to the gods." What inconsistency there was in those who encouraged suicide when the troubles of life became intolerable, and yet maintained that the wise man was superior to all sorrow! "A happy life, forsooth," S. Augustine exclaims, "to escape from which a man must needs seek death! If it be so happy, wherefore quit it?" And surely the famous suicide of Cato, who thereby escaped what he esteemed indignity, was less the token of firm courage than of a weak mind which dared not face adversity. Either he grudged Cæsar the glory of sparing his life, or he would not stoop to the conqueror he hated; and even if we allow that this was courage, we cannot call it wisdom or fortitude. No cruelty is so savage as that which is in cold blood and deliberate, and it is the same with despair.

Again, of Lucretia, S. Augustine says,—if she was indeed chaste, wherefore should she have slain herself? Because she feared the shame which might have been cast on her had she lived. But is it right to slay the innocent to escape from the lash of man's opinion? Ought honour to be preserved at the expense of virtue, or reputation at the cost of justice? But such were the virtues of the best of heathen. Moreover, they utterly disregarded the love of others, even legally trampling such a rule under their feet. Even Aristotle and Seneca asserted that deformed or sickly children ought to be put away, and that an inconveniently large family might be reduced by abortion, or the exposure of the weakest members. Surely these are they of whom S. Paul says that, "professing themselves to be wise, their foolish hearts were darkened, and they became fools."¹ The end of all pagan virtue was this world's fame, and no virtue is really such without good motive or intention. The Council of Orange has said that the point of heathen good works lay in earthly love, that of the Christian in Heavenly love. And S. Augustine says that their

¹ Rom. 1.

virtues were only external, not having a sound foundation ; and at the Judgment Day their good works will rise up to the mitigation only of their condemnation, not to their salvation. Vainglory was the repressing power among them against sin, and they despised vanity for very vanity's sake ; as when Diogenes, trampling Plato's draperies under foot, replied to the owner's demand what he was doing, "I trample on the pride of Plato." "It may be so," was Plato's reply, "but it is with yet greater pride."

Or remember Seneca on his deathbed bequeathing to his friends as his best legacy the glorious example of his own life ! Love of praise was the source of such men's virtue.

In the Greek the ruby and carbuncle bear a name signifying both fiery and flameless ; for these precious stones shine like fire, yet are cold, and incapable of being inflamed. So the Fathers have called heathen virtues at once real and unreal, because in spite of their seeming brightness they were not instigated by the love of God. We might liken them to worm-eaten fruit, which outwardly is fair to see, but within is rotten to the core. Granted that Cato was a man of courage, but he who would profit by Cato's example should rather seek to die when need is for the truth's sake, than out of mere lust of glory. Surely a Laurence, a Vincent, a Sebastian, a Perpetua, an Agnes, a Catherine, is no less a model of firmness and courage than a Cato or a Lucretia ?

CHAPTER XI.

All Human Actions are Worthless if performed apart from the Love of God.

A BRAHAM, the friend of God, had but one son by Sarah, who was his heir, and the other sons by Hagar and Keturah could not enter into the lawful

succession, not being recognised by his true wife, for Keturah's children were not born till after Sarah's death; and although she gave Hagar to Abraham, the latter "despised" her mistress, and was cast out before Ishmael's birth. Even so none save the offspring of holy love are "the heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ."¹ Even the best actions without love, such as schismatics may perform, says S. Augustine, are worthless. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And if, while bringing forth moral virtues, the will is contrary to its lawful ruler, charity, such virtues will be driven forth as profitless, even as Hagar was driven forth from Abraham's house, because their faulty motive deprives them of all merit—a lesson taught by our Lord Himself in His parable of the Pharisee and Publican.²

The Israelites dwelt peacefully in Egypt so long as Joseph lived, but after his death they fell into bondage, whence the Hebrew proverb (which I unworthily learnt from the venerable Genebrand, Bishop of Aix), "When one brother dies, the others succumb." Thus while God's Love reigns in man's heart all virtue thrives and prospers; but when once that fails all the others, Ishmael-like, are cast out, and lose their right of heritage: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them: for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die."³ Mortal sin effaces all merit; such good deeds as are performed before a man is guilty thereof are destroyed thereby, and those performed while it reigns in his heart are fruitless and lifeless.

The Dead Sea is said to be so accursed that nothing can live therein. The fish which come down the river Jordan quickly die as they approach it, and the fruits which grow on its shores, albeit fair without, within are dust and ashes. Sin, too, is as a moral Dead Sea, which destroys all life in or about the soul

¹ Rom. viii. 17.² Luke xviii.³ Ezek. xviii. 26.

which approaches it. Nor are its fruits merely dead, but so poisonous, that where it is no branch can bear good fruit, and even those which have a fair exterior are void and loathsome. Our Lord tells the Bishop of Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead,"¹ because his fruits had no savour of love in them. "Where love is," says S. Augustine, "all is precious; where love is not, all is nothing worth." And "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"²

CHAPTER XII.

**God's Love, if renewed in the Soul, revives all
that Sin had slain.**

THOSE works which the sinner performs apart from holy love cannot avail to life eternal, and are called *dead works*; while the good deeds of the just man are called *living works*, because God's Love inspires them. If these lose their worth through subsequent sin we call them, not dead, but so to say extinguished. For as our Lord said of Jairus's daughter, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," so the good works of God's elect which have been overclouded by sin are not really dead, but half killed, slumbering; and if holy love resumes its sway they may live and rise again. As the return of sin deprives the heart and its works of life, so the return of grace restores them to life. A severe winter destroys vegetation, and if it lasted nature would never revive; but the return of spring both causes the fresh seed to grow, and revives the trees which seemed to be dead. So God's Grace reviving in the heart both brings fresh blessings and merits, and rekindles the all but extinct grace of past deeds. "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that

¹ Rev. iii. 1.

² Matt. xvi. 26.

which is lawful and right, he shall live ;”¹ “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions ; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”² So the prodigal son was not merely met by his father’s embrace, but he was restored to all the position and privilege he had forfeited ; and Job, the type of the restored sinner, received of the Lord twice as much as he had before. And S. Paul bids us “abound in the work of the Lord, because we know our labour is not in vain in Him,” and because “God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love.” The Lord is mindful of their works who, having lost love through sin, regain it through repentance. He forgets their works who lose holiness by sin ; He remembers them when love restores their life. So that, in order to future grace and glory, it needs not that the faithful servant of God should never have fallen into sin, but if he die in God’s Grace and Love it sufficeth. God has promised an eternal reward to the just man ; but if he turn from his righteousness and sin, his former good works will be no more remembered. Yet if he return and repent neither will his sin be remembered, but only his former good works, his sin being altogether blotted out, or rather, God’s Mercy refusing to recall them ; else David had not dared say, “Give me the comfort of Thy Help again, and stablish me with Thy free Spirit.”³ He asks not only for a renewed heart, but for the “comfort” which sin had deprived him of. And that comfort is the wine of God’s Love, which “maketh glad the heart of man.”

Observe the difference between sin and good works. The just man’s good works are not done away with when he sins, but only forgotten ; but the sin of the wicked man is not merely forgotten, it is effaced, blotted out by repentance. Sin cannot revive past sins which have been put away ; but love reviving, does simultaneously revive all these good works which were only laid aside, not effaced. Sin makes man

¹ Ezek. xviii. 27.² Ezek. xviii. 30.³ Ps. li. 12.

incapable of eternal life ; but so soon as sin is repented of and put away, God remembers man's past good works, and they become fruitful. Sin has less power as opposed to love, than love has as opposed to sin, and that because sin is the fruit of man's weakness, love of God's Strength. If sin abound to form man's destruction, grace much more aboundeth,¹ and "mercy rejoiceth against judgment."² Thus whenever our Lord performed a miracle of bodily healing He always added thereto fresh blessings, so bounteous are His dealings with man.

I have read in Pliny that the bee, when seemingly dead, will revive if laid in the spring sunshine, beneath some fig-wood ashes, but I never heard that wasps or gnats revive in like manner. Neither do we find from Holy Scripture or any theologian that our sins which have been destroyed by penitence can ever live again ; but good works, like the bee, are recalled to life by the sunshine of grace, and are effectual once more. When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, the sacred fire from the Altar was hid in a pit, where it was lost in mud ; but when, after long years, this mud was drawn up, and the sacrifice laid upon it, there was a great fire kindled, and the sacrifice was consumed.³ So when the just man suffers himself to become the slave of sin all his past good works are reduced, as it were, to mud ; but once set free from the pit, and touched with the light of love, they revive, and break forth into pure flames meet for God's Altar, and are restored to their original worth and grace.

¹ Rom. v.

² James ii. 13.

³ 2 Macc. i.

CHAPTER XIII.

All our Actions should be done in the Light of Love.

THE inferior animals all tend to their ultimate distinction, but without knowing it, for they are incapable of choice or intention. But man has control over his reason and acts, and can direct them to such end as he chooses. Thus he can wholly pervert the natural end of an action, *e.g.* if he takes an oath to deceive, the object of oaths being to prevent deceit; or he can add a secondary object, as when in almsgiving, which primarily is in order to relieve the poor, he also intends to win affection, or set a good example.

Now sometimes the secondary object of men is inferior to the action itself, sometimes equivalent to it, and sometimes far higher. For instance, in almsgiving, beyond the direct object of giving relief to the needy, there may be first the object of winning his affection, next of edification to others, and thirdly, pleasing God, when these different objects are respectively less, equal, and greatly superior to the original end of almsgiving. Thus it is plain that the perfection of our acts may be greatly diversified by the motive, end, or intention with which they are performed.

In the parable of the Talents our Lord says, "Thou oughtest to have put My money to the exchangers."¹ Be it ours to trade wisely and cautiously with aims and motives in this spiritual traffic. Thus a man takes office with a view to serving his country honourably; but if he considers his own honour more than the public welfare, or even equally with it, he does amiss, and falls into the snares of ambition. But if, while making his country's service his chief object, he accepts such honour as does credit to his

¹ Matt. xxv. 27.

family, he cannot be blamed, inasmuch as there is no collision between the two interests. Another man makes his Easter Communion in order to avoid the criticism of his neighbours and to please God, and he does well. But if his object is as much, or more, to avoid censure as to obey God, who but will grant that he is wrong in showing as much deference to man's opinion as to God? I may fast in Lent out of devotion, to please God; or out of obedience, because the Church enjoins it; or out of temperance and with a view to more diligent study; or out of economy, or out of chastity, to subdue my body, and pray better. Of course I may combine all these motives, but if so, they must be duly kept each in its proper place; for if I fast rather to save money than for obedience's sake, or more in order to study profitably than to please God, is it not obvious that I reverse what is right and due, preferring my own interests to those of God and His Church? Fasting with a view to economy is good, for obedience it is better, for God's Sake it is best; and although evil can hardly come out of three good points, yet a culpable disorder may arise from unduly preferring the least important motive.

If a man invites only one friend to a feast none can take offence; but if he invites all, and then gives the chief places to those of least dignity, and the reverse, he will offend everybody,—one side because he depreciates them, the other because he puts them to shame. So he who performs any act from a reasonable motive, however trivial, is safe; but if he has several motives he must be sure that each assumes its due proportion, or he will do wrong. He who desires to please God and Our Lady does well, but he who seeks to please her as much or more than God is guilty of an intolerable error, and might be addressed like Cain: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."¹ Each

¹ Gen. iv. 7.

aim must hold its own due place, and so necessarily that of pleasing God must have the pre-eminence. And the highest aim of all man's actions, which is the love of God, has this sovereign property, viz., that its purity purifies the action which it produces, so that the saints and angels have no object whatsoever in their love save God's Goodness and pleasing Him. Truly, they love each other, they love us, they love all holiness, but all for God's Sake only. They practise virtue, not because it is attractive, but because it is acceptable to God ; they seek happiness, not for their own delight, but because He would have it so. Their very love is not selfish, but tends solely to God ; it is precious to them, not because it is theirs, but because it is the gift of God, and He delights therein.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Practical Result thereof.

OUR efforts must be directed to purify each and all of our intentions, shedding the light of Divine Love on every action, rejecting all the unholy motives which vainglory and self inspire, and sifting everything which moves us till we reach the only true motive-power, the love of God. For instance, a man may enter upon active service, first of all from the natural impetus of strength and courage which delight in perilous undertakings ; but beyond that there may be the desire to obey his sovereign, love for his country, and generous delight in performing noble deeds. But to purify and exalt all such motives the Christian warrior will offer them all to God and His service. Such a continual recurrence to God will sanctify all other aims and motives. Aristotle says that he who steals to indulge his passion for drink is rather a drunkard than a thief, and he who

exercises valour, obedience, patriotism, and generosity with a view to please God, is even more emphatically a lover of God than a patriot or a brave soldier.

We do not say that we are going to Lyons, but to Paris, when Paris is our ultimate point, and we only pass Lyons on the way. And if from time to time some lesser motive comes forcibly before us, *e.g.* if we are greatly attracted to chastity because of the beauty of a pure life, we may always turn back upon God, asking to find our best delight in pleasing Him. And whatever good or holy thing we do, we ought always to sanctify with our Lord's Own words, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy Sight."¹ The great charm of any virtue to a Christian ought to lie in its being acceptable to God; yet there have been men who have blindly followed certain virtues for their own sake, forgetful of Him. Thus Origen and Tertullian were both guilty of error in their passionate devotion to chastity, and the sect which rose up in Lyons drove their admiration of poverty to fanaticism, while certain heretics exalted almsgiving and charity towards man beyond the Love of God. "His banner over me was love,"² says the Bride. And love is the banner which leads the army of virtues; all must be subject to it; our only General, the Lord Jesus Christ, recognises no other standard. Learn to measure all virtues by obedience to love, loving each virtue for itself, but chiefly because it is acceptable to God, and preferring that which is best, not because it is best, but because He loves it best. Thus holy love will inspire all, and make all precious to our salvation.

¹ Matt. xi. 26.

² Cant. i. 4.

CHAPTER XV.

Love includes all the Sevenfold Gifts.

MAN'S reason seeking to attain that natural happiness which is set before him needs sundry aids. Thus he needs temperance, that he may repress the bold attempts of sensuality ; justice, that he may render what is due to God, his neighbour, and himself ; fortitude, that he may conquer the inevitable difficulty he finds in doing good and avoiding evil ; counsel, to discern the best means of attaining the true good ; wisdom, to know what is really good and evil ; understanding, to perceive the fundamental principles of beauty and truth ; and lastly, knowledge, to contemplate the Godhead, First Cause of all good. And the Holy Spirit Which dwells in us, vouchsafing to mould our souls to His Own inspirations, the laws of His Love, on which all our supernatural blessedness in this life rests ; has given us the qualities and graces above mentioned, which are called in Holy Scripture the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. And these are not only inseparable from love, but strictly speaking they are inherent parts of love. For (1) knowledge is love tasting and experiencing how gracious the Lord is ; (2) understanding is love attentively pondering the beauty of the faith, seeking God therein as revealed to His creatures ; (3) wisdom is love fixing our attention on self and creation, so that we may ascend from a fuller knowledge thereof to a more perfect service of God ; (4) counsel is love carefully selecting the best means of serving Him in holiness ; (5) fortitude is love strengthening the heart to do that which counsel points out ; (6) piety is love softening toil, and leading us to do the work appointed us out of filial devotion ; and (7) fear is love seeking to shun whatever is displeasing to God's Majesty.

Thus charity becomes, as it were, a second Jacob's ladder to us, in which the Sevenfold Gifts of the Holy Spirit are the blessed steps by which men may mount up to Heaven through union with God, and descend to earth for the help and comfort of their brethren. By the first step fear makes them shun evil; by the second piety kindles the desire of good; thirdly, knowledge teaches what ill to shun and what good to seek; fourthly, fortitude supplies courage to meet inevitable difficulties; fifthly, counsel enables men to elect the most suitable means thereto; the sixth step unites the understanding to God, showing forth His Infinite Beauty; and the seventh joins the will to His, enabling it to taste the abundance of His Goodness. And at the top of the ladder God Himself is found, bending towards His creature with a loving embrace, and "His Love is better than wine."¹

Then returning to our neighbour, in order to lead him to a like blessing, as on the highest step the will has been kindled with burning zeal, and softened by the sweetness of God's Love, so on the next the understanding becomes marvellously enlightened, and filled with glowing thoughts and holy precepts. On the third step the gift of counsel supplies suggestions how to win men to know and love Divine Goodness; the fourth furnishes strength to overcome such difficulties as are to be encountered; the fifth supplies wisdom to teach and guide souls in the right way; from the sixth he who is on it draws men to a devout and loving obedience and childlike fear; while from the last step he urges the terrors of the Lord upon them, so that by holy fear they may be the more disposed to forsake earth and seek Heaven.

Charity is like a glorious lily, whose snow-white petals are the Sevenfold Gifts, and its pistils golden wisdom, which bring forth delight in God the Father's Goodness, in the Mercy of God the Redeemer, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit sanctifying men.

¹ Cant. i. 2.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Loving Fear of the Bride.

THY love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."¹ So said David mourning over Jonathan, as though his love was even tenderer than that of a wife for her husband. The perfection of love in a pure wife's heart abounds in precious qualities ; it is chaste and modest, strong yet tender, ardent yet self-contained, generous yet timid, vigorous yet obedient, and its fear is mingled with a most happy trust. Such is the fear of a truly loving soul,—so confident in the Bridegroom's Love that it cannot fear losing it, and can only fear lest it lose any particle of His Beloved Presence. Its love is too confident to fear offending Him, yet it fain would please Him better ; too generous to imagine any change possible, yet nevertheless seeking to draw closer, longing for a yet purer, more devoted love. Such a soul shrinks from resting even in the purest spiritual delights and consolations, lest they should distract it from the Giver thereof, crying out, "Tell me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon : for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions ?"²

It was this holy fear which inspired a S. Paul, a S. Francis, a S. Catherine of Genoa, to shun all division of their affection, striving to make it so pure and single that not even spiritual consolations or virtues should come between their heart and God, so that they might truly say, "I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ;"³ "What is not God is nought ;" "Jesus my Life."

The first beginnings of this holy fear come from true love, but a love as yet frail and weak. Child-

¹ 2 Sam. i. 26.² Cant. i. 7.³ Gal. ii. 20.

like fear comes from a firm, substantial love seeking after perfection ; but the Bride's fear arises from the very excellence and perfection of her existing love, whereas ordinary servile fear, though it is not the offspring of love, does sometimes help to lead the way to it. You have seen those who, like the "virtuous woman" described by Solomon,¹ "eat not the bread of idleness," embroider all manner of beauteous and rich vestments, piercing the fabric they seek to adorn with their needle. But the needle is only needed to enable the gold thread or silk to pass through ; and so God uses the sharp point of fear to prick man's heart and pass holy graces and desires into it, withdrawing the useful instrument when its work is done, even as S. John tells us that "perfect love casteth out fear."²

Verily, it were not possible for servile fear to abide permanently together with that holy love which is all joy, sweetness, and peace.

CHAPTER XVII.

How far Servile Fear may abide with Holy Love.

THE embroidress, if suddenly stopped in her work, will oftentimes leave her needle in the flower she is tracing, the more surely to find it again ; so God's Providence often lets servile fear linger about man's heart until, love being perfected, it is no longer needed. And forasmuch as in this life our love can never be absolutely perfect, we ever need some salutary check of fear. Even amid our keenest thrills of joyful love we must "serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence."³ Abraham sent Eliezer (whose name signifies "The help of God") to fetch a bride for his son, but so soon as Rebecca saw Isaac she forthwith left Eliezer, and being taken into what had been Sarah's tent, she became Isaac's wife. So God

¹ Prov. xxxi.

² 1 John iv. 18.

³ Ps. ii. 11.

sends fear, as another Eliezer, to contract a marriage between the soul and holy love. Fear may be the first guide along the way, but so soon as the soul perceives love it forsakes fear and cleaves to love for ever.

Yet after his return, doubtless, Eliezer abode in Isaac's service; and so fear will remain as a useful servant to love, for at times the soul will be beset by grievous temptations and human infirmities, and then love calls fear to the rescue, and drives back the foe. When Jonathan assaulted the Philistines' garrison at Michmash, he slew his foes, and "his armourbearer slew after him."¹ Even so love is supported by the help of servile fear, and those temptations which love does not defeat the fear of condemnation slays. Suppose the temptation to pride, avarice, or sensuality assaults me, I am fain to ask, Can I forsake the Beloved of my soul for such things as these? But if that be not enough, love rouses fear, reminding me that for even such things I may lose my heavenly heritage. We must use every aid in extremity, even as Jonathan and his armourbearer crept on their hands and feet in that same bold assault.

The sailor never leaves his anchors or cables behind, however smooth the sea when he quits the shore, knowing that storms may arise; and however blessed God's servant may be with present rest and comfort, he must never be unarmed with that fear of his Master's Justice which will strengthen him amid the storms of temptation. The rind of a fruit, however uneatable, is absolutely necessary to the preservation of that fruit; so servile fear, however inferior in worth to love, is most essential to its preservation amid the changes and chances of life. When you give a pomegranate to any one it is the juice and seeds you mean to offer, but needs must you give the rind as well; so the Holy Spirit gives holy fear together with His other Gifts, and at the same time He gives servile fear as a manner of rind, needful to the preservation

¹ 1 Sam. xiv. 13.

of that higher, better fear. When Joseph sent costly presents of the treasures of Egypt to his father, the asses which bore them formed a part of his present.

But useful as servile fear is during our mortal life, it is not worthy of everlasting life, where there will be fearless confidence, certain happiness, and undisturbed rest. Yet while our earthly servile fear, like Moses and Aaron, will not be suffered to enter into the Promised Land, nevertheless their offspring will enter in, and that holy fear which the Bride has known will be transformed into a boundless reverence and admiration for the Incomprehensible Majesty of the Great and Glorious Bridegroom.

The fear of the Lord endureth for ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How Love employs Natural, Servile, and Mercenary Fear.

THE most irreligious of men are roused to fear God by natural terrors; storm, tempest, or earthquake, and at such times their unconscious impulse bids them raise their eyes and hands to God for help. Titus Livius says that there is a universal impression among men that they who serve God are prospered, they who despise Him afflicted. When Jonah was storm-taken "the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god,"¹ not knowing the truth, says S. Jerome, but recognising God's Hand in their peril. And so the barbarous people among whom S. Paul was shipwrecked believed the viper which hung upon his hand to be the sign of Divine vengeance.² David speaks of the wind and storm as "fulfilling God's Word,"³ as ministers of His Justice; and again he says, "Cast forth Thy lightning, and tear them; shoot out

¹ Jon. i. 5.

² Acts xxviii. 4.

³ Ps. cxlviii. 8.

Thine arrows and consume them;"¹ and earlier yet Hannah said, "Out of Heaven shall He thunder upon them."² Plato repeatedly testifies to this fear among the heathen, not merely of God's temporal judgments, but of His future and eternal judgment, so deeply rooted in human nature is an instinctive fear of God.

Such a mere instinct is neither worthy of praise nor blame, being, as it is, all unwitting; but its use is great, inasmuch as it teaches us our dependence on God's Omnipotence, and our need to seek His Aid. The Christian, exposed to any storm or terror, invokes that aid, signs himself with the Cross, and makes acts of faith, hope, and trust. S. Thomas Aquinas, being naturally afraid of thunder, used to stay himself with the solemn words, "The Word was made flesh." David exclaims, "I will give thanks unto Thee, for . . . marvellous are Thy works;"³ "Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence."⁴

Again, there is a fear coming of faith which warns us that after this life there are eternal terrors awaiting those who die unreconciled to God, which reminds us of the particular judgment awaiting every soul at the hour of death, and the final Day of Judgment for all men. And such thoughts strike the heart at times with an overwhelming fear; who, indeed, can dwell upon them without trembling? But if they serve to banish the attractions of sin, they are indeed blessed. "Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman . . . is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs, so have we been in Thy Sight, O Lord."⁵ "There is no rest in my bones, by reason of my sin."⁶

Our Lord Himself, the Giver of Love, teaches this fear: "Fear Him Which is able to destroy both soul

¹ Ps. cxliv. 6.

² 1 Sam. ii. 10.

³ Ps. cxxxix. 13.

⁴ Ps. ii. 11.

⁵ Isa. xxvi. 16, 17.

⁶ Ps. xxxviii. 3.

and body in hell.”¹ The Ninevites repented in love, sequence of their fear, and God spared them.

But if fear does not uproot the inclination to deliberate sin it is unavailing, nay rather, it is like that which devils feel and tremble, or that of a galley-slave. He who only abstains from sin because he fears the inevitable judgment of God is guilty in his will, and would gladly transgress were not hell on the other side. Another less odious, but equally unprofitable, fear is that of Felix, who, hearing Paul speak of God’s judgment, trembled, yet forsook not his sins ; or Belshazzar, who, when he saw God’s Handwriting of his condemnation on the wall, “changed countenance, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another,”² yet did not repent. It avails little to fear evil, if that fear does not lead us to avoid it.

The mere slavish fear which obeys God out of fear of hell is good in itself, but how far higher and better is even the mercenary fear of the Christian ; I mean those who serve God less from love than in order to obtain their promised reward. Could eye see or ear hear, or could it enter into the heart of man to conceive, the blessedness prepared of God for them that serve Him,³ how greatly men would fear to break His Commandments, lest they lose their reward ! what tears of penitence would they weep ! Yet even this fear were unblest were it not combined with love ; and verily, could we conceive a man deliberately choosing to serve God solely for an expected reward rejecting His Love, that man were nothing but a blasphemer.

But when a man fears to displease God, not merely because he dreads hell or the loss of Paradise, but because his obedience and reverence are due to God his Father, then such is filial fear, even as an affectionate child does not obey its parent merely from fear of being punished or disinherited, but because he is a son ; and were his father ever so old, helpless,

¹ Matt. x. 28.

² Dan. v. 6.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

poor, his obedience would be no less dutiful, but He would serve him the more tenderly. Joseph revered his father Jacob all the more because circumstances had placed him in a superior position; and when, after Jacob's death, his other sons sought to obtain Joseph's pardon, they knew no more forcible plea than "Thy father did command before he died. . . . And Joseph wept when they spake unto him."¹

Sometimes, indeed, this filial fear may be found mixed with the slavish fear of eternal damnation, or the mercenary fear of losing Heaven, without ceasing to be acceptable to God. This is technically called *initial* fear, being, as it were, the beginnings of a higher mental attitude. A young rider holds on to his saddle or whatnot when his horse prances, but the experienced horseman is indifferent to all aids, depending on his good seat. So the novice in God's service may make use of any kind of fear which will help him to overcome his foes, and save him from a fall.

CHAPTER XIX.

Divine Love includes the Fruits of the Holy Ghost and the Beatitudes.

"**N**OW the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."² And we must here observe that S. Paul speaks of all those in the singular—"fruit," not "fruits." Love is the one sole fruit of the Holy Spirit; but inasmuch as love has infinite properties, the Apostle divides it into sundry parts without preventing its unity. We speak of the grape, wine, and all its varied forms, as "the fruit of the vine," not meaning thereby that they are really different fruits, but different forms of the one fruit. In the same way

¹ Gen. i. 16, 17.

² Gal. v. 22, 23.

S. Paul teaches that the fruit of the Spirit is love, which love is joyous, peaceful, long-suffering, gentle, good, faithful, meek, temperate ; filling the soul with inward joy and peace ; making its possessor kind and good towards others, ready to bear with their faults and imperfections ; modest and humble in loving, temperate and continent in all manner of sensual pleasure ; filled inwardly with all these gracious fruits of love, and stamped outwardly with their external and visible signs.

Love is called the fruit of the Holy Spirit because it is to us as a very produce of the Tree of Life,—the Spirit of God Himself grafted upon our spirit, and dwelling in us by His great Mercy. And when we are not merely content to rejoice in their possession, but look to its fruition as the crown of our blessedness, it becomes more than a very precious fruit, it becomes a very beatitude, securing not merely our happiness in this life, but in the next, filling us with so unalterable a content that the waves and storms of trouble and persecution cannot destroy it. Poverty enriches it, humiliation exalts it, tears gladden it, deprivation strengthens it, renunciation becomes sweet to it, and all manner of trial is welcome, inasmuch as its best life is to die for Christ.

Thus love is at once a virtue, a gift, a fruit, and a beatitude. As a virtue it forms us to obedience to God's inward inspirations through His Commandments or Counsels, wherein love is the crown of virtue ; as a gift love makes us plastic and susceptible to those inward inspirations which are God's hidden counsels, to which the Sevenfold Gifts point ; as a fruit it imparts an exceeding delight in the exercise of the devout life ; as a beatitude it teaches men to take positive delight in the calumny, injury, and contempt which the world lavishes upon Christ's servants, as also to forsake and renounce all glory save that of the Cross, through which we learn to glory in our own abjection and abnegation, seeking no royal insignia

save the Crown of thorns, the reed sceptre, the mantle of shame, and the throne of the Cross, whereon he who is a true lover finds greater happiness and glory than Solomon upon his ivory throne.

CHAPTER XX.

*Love disposes of all the Passions and Emotions,
subjecting them to Itself.*

LOVE is the heart's life. Just as a clock depends upon the movements of the pendulum, so love imparts all life to the soul. All our affections are regulated by our love, and according to that we desire, enjoy, hope or fear, hate, shun, grieve or triumph. We see a man who has given himself up to some unworthy earthly love altogether lost in it, hoping and fearing, seeking and desiring nothing else; and so, again, with those who have yielded to a passionate love of wealth or honour, they become the slaves of the thing they love, and have neither thought nor heart for aught besides.

So when the love of God reigns in our heart it right royally subjects all other affections of the will; it subdues sensual love, and reducing it to obedience, the sensual passions follow. In a word, this holy love is that living water of which our Lord said he that drinketh thereof shall never thirst. Verily, he who does but heartily love God will know no longing, or fear, or hope, or rest, save in God, and his every emotion will tend Godward.

The love of God and of self are both within us, like Jacob and Esau in Rebecca's womb. They are sorely repugnant one to the other, and struggle together so that we are fain to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death,"¹ and God's Love alone reign in me? But we

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

must be of good cheer, and hope in His Word Who gives His promise with His precept, saying to the soul as He said to Rebecca, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels ; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people ; and the elder shall serve the younger."¹ They were but two babes which were thus described as "peoples," but from them nations were destined to spring ; and from these two affections which occupy man's heart, God and self, a whole world of emotions and passions will arise, causing sore travail within the soul, like to Rebecca's material travail. And even as it was foretold her that of her two unborn babes "the elder should serve the younger," so it is appointed of God that our sensual love should serve that which is spiritual, *i.e.* that self-love should serve the love of God.

This prophecy concerning Rebecca's offspring was not fulfilled until David had conquered the Idumeans, and Solomon reigned over them in peace. And when will our earthly love be subject to Divine Love? Not until that Love becomes so strong that it is able to subdue every passion by mortification ; or, more truly still, when we attain to Heaven, where that most blessed Love will wholly possess our souls.

We have a type of the way in which God's Love must subdue self-love in Jacob, who, while Esau was coming to the birth, seized him by the foot, as though to hinder him. So Divine Love, seeing some merely natural or sensual affection coming to the light, seizes it by the foot, and subjects it to the service of God. When Moses laid hold of the Egyptian magician's rod it turned to a miraculous wand ; and so even our passions may be turned to a good end by the love of God.

How can this transformation be effected? Certain physicians maintain the theory that diseases are cured by their contrary effects, while others say precisely

¹ Gen. xxv. 23

the reverse, that like is cured by like. Whichever is right, we know that the stars' light is obscured both by the night mist and by the brightness of the sun, and wherefore should we not resist our earthly passions alike by means of what is contrary, and by affections like to themselves? A false trust in man may be counteracted by the thought that the great ones of the earth are as subject to mortality as one's-self, that they are as weak, unstable, and frail as we are. The affection on which we rest so confidently to-day may be diverted to another to-morrow. Then is the time to defy such false hopes, taking shelter in one that is truer: "It is He that shall pluck my feet out of the net;"¹ "Did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in His fear, and was forsaken?"²

In the same way we may fight against the longing after temporal ease or wealth, either by dwelling upon the contempt they merit, or by the superior attractions of things immortal, thus extinguishing earthly love by Love Divine, as flames are extinguished by water, or by fire from heaven, overpowering them.

Our Lord made use of both manners of cure. He taught His disciples to despise earthly fear by teaching them a higher fear: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him Which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."³ And again, He taught them not to rest in a low form of joy, saying, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven;"⁴ and again, "Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep."⁵ Thus God's Love supplants and subdues earthly affections and passions, diverting them from the end self had in view, and turning them to spiritual ends. Even as the rainbow resting upon the herb *Aspalathus* takes away its natural scent, and imparts one far sweeter, so

¹ Ps. xxv. 14.

² Ecclus. ii. 10.

³ Matt. x. 28.

⁴ Luke x. 20.

⁵ Luke vi. 25.

Divine Love resting upon earthly passions takes away their earthliness, and spiritualises them.

The most earthly actions may be supernaturalised by being performed in the spirit of love. We may eat, offering the act to God, as sustaining the body He has given us to do His service; we may rejoice in friendship, because God has given our friends to be our stay and solace. Our fears may be offered to Him, remembering that He gathereth His children as a hen her young ones under her wings, and then who shall make us afraid? We shall do what we can to avoid the danger we fear, saying, "I am Thine, oh, save me!" then, come what may, it will be well. Thrice-blessed alchemy, by which we reduce every passion, affection, and desire to the pure gold of Heavenly Love!

CHAPTER XXI.

Sadness is for the most part Unprofitable, and even opposed to Divine Love.

WE cannot graft an oak upon a pear-tree, so essentially different the two are; neither can anger or despair be grafted into charity. We have already discussed anger, and as to despair, save by reducing it to a due mistrust of self, or a consciousness of the vanity and emptiness of all worldly hopes and promises, I know not what it can possibly do on behalf of holy love. Or how can sadness have any part in Divine Love, when joy is so prominently placed as one of the Gifts of the Spirit? S. Paul speaks of a "godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, but the sorrow of the world worketh death."¹ So there is a "godly sorrow" which is felt by repentant sinners, or by good men for the misfortunes of others, or by saints for the spiritual loss of souls. Thus David, Peter, and Magdalene wept over their own

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

sins ; Hagar wept to see her son perishing of thirst ; Jeremiah wept over Jerusalem, our Lord over the faithless city ; and S. Paul wept over the "enemies of the Cross of Christ."¹

The sorrow or sadness of this world springs from three sources.

I. From the great Enemy of souls, who confuses the understanding, enfeebles the will, and dismays the soul by a host of woful, dreary suggestions. And just as a thick mist impedes the traveller's breath and hinders his progress, so these dismal thoughts clouding the mind hinder it from rising upwards, and cause discouragement and depression. There is a certain fish called the sea-devil, which seizes its prey by means of stirring up the mud so as to conceal itself until it springs upon the fish near it, whence, probably, the common phrase "to fish in troubled waters." This is precisely what Satan does : he troubles and clouds the soul by a swarm of vexing thoughts, and then seizes his prey, overwhelming it with mistrust, envy, dislikes, jealousy, memories of past sin and the like, and prompting it to reject all reasonable consolations.

II. Again, sadness sometimes arises from natural temperament ; and this is not necessarily wrong in itself, yet the Enemy uses it largely to tempt and harm the soul. The spider only weaves its web when the sky is dark and cloudy, and the Evil One is never so prone to spread his toils around bright, cheerful minds as around those who are gloomy and depressed, for they are much more easily influenced by vexations, suspicions, hatred, murmurs, envy, and spiritual sloth.

III. There is a sadness inevitable to the vicissitudes of life. "What joy can be mine, who sit in darkness and see not the light of heaven?" Tobias asked of the Angel.² Thus Jacob sorrowed over the tidings of

¹ Phil. iii. 18.

² "Et ait Tobias : Quale gaudium mihi erit, qui in tenebris sedeo, et lumen cœli non video ?" This is lost in the English version.

Joseph's death, David over his son Absalom. Such sorrow is common to good and bad men alike, but in the good it is relieved by resignation to God's Will; *e.g.* Tobias, who gave thanks through all, Job blessing the Lord's Name, David singing praises. But worldly men are overpowered by such sorrow, and break forth into murmuring and despair. Such men are peevish, bitter, and downcast in sorrow, and generally headstrong and insolent in prosperity.

The sorrow of true penitence is less sadness than regret for and abhorrence of evil. It is never fretful or harassing; it rather quickens than paralyses the mind, rather stimulates the heart to more earnest prayer and devotion, and to fresh hope, than depresses it. Such sorrow always appreciates a fund of infinite consolation when at its keenest; as S. Augustine says, that while the penitent sorrows he rejoices in his sadness. And Cassian says that the sorrow which works true penitence never to be repented of is obedient, gentle, humble, cheerful, patient, as befits the outcome of love. And even when bodily suffering is added to moral grief such a man is hopeful and vigorous, having possession of the fruits of the Holy Spirit which S. Paul tells us of.

This true penitence and holy sorrow is very far from dreariness and melancholy, but is watchful in its abhorrence and rejection of past sin as of what might arise in the future. We sometimes see men who are anxious, restless, fretful, and impatient in their repentance, which is sure to be unprofitable in consequence, such emotions arising from self-love, not from the true mainsprings of a sincere penitence. "The sorrow of the world worketh death," and we are bound to avoid it with all our might. If it comes of our natural temperament we must resist and counteract it by every means in our power, even having recourse to medical advice in the matter. If it comes as a temptation the best thing is freely to open our grief to our spiritual guide, who will help to overcome it. If it be

accidental we must recall how profitable tribulation is to God's children, and dwell upon the greatness of our eternal hopes while suffering under the passing troubles of this life. In all alike it behoves us to use our highest powers of will to seek God's Love. There may be certain things which depend so entirely upon constitution and temperament that we cannot control them. Externals—the countenance, voice, and manner—may be beyond a man's own control ; but even if he cannot assume a gracious manner every one can speak kind and gracious words, and constrain himself to act with courtesy and gentleness. A man may be pardoned for not being always cheerful,—we are not always capable of cheerfulness at will ; but there is no excuse for not always being kindly, obliging, and courteous, for that is within a man's own control, and only requires a firm resolution to overcome his temper or inclination to be otherwise.

BOOK XII.

COUNSELS CONCERNING THE SOUL'S ADVANCE IN DIVINE LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

**Advance in Divine Love does not depend upon
Natural Temperament.**

A WELL-KNOWN living religious has said that natural temperament has a great deal to do with contemplative love, and that it is most commonly found among persons of emotional tendencies. This cannot mean to say that Divine Love is imparted either to men or angels as a consequence, still less as a reward, of their natural qualities; such an opinion would be alike opposed to the teaching of the Bible and the Church. The love of which I have been speaking is that supernatural love which God sheds into our hearts of His Goodness, and which dwells solely in the most exalted region of the mind, being wholly independent of natural temperament. And we must remember, that although a naturally loving soul may have a strong tendency to love God, it is at the same time so inclined, by reason of that very disposition, to cling to creature love, and there is as much danger to it of straying from and intermingling lower love with the highest as facility for that highest love; the risk of misapplied love being commensurate with the power of ready affection.

It is true that when persons of such a disposition are really set free from creature love they make marvellous progress in the love of God; their heart

being a ready soil to bear such fruit, and they will show forth an outward attractiveness which is not to be found in those whose natural disposition is stern, repelling, or gloomy. If two people, the one gentle and loving, the other harsh and morose by natural temperament, possess an equal degree of charity, they will love God equally, but not similarly. The one will love more easily, more pleasantly, but not more firmly or with greater perfection; while that love which is nurtured amid the thorns and briars of a naturally harsh, rude character will be nobler and more courageous. It seems to me to matter little whether the natural disposition is loving or not, with reference to an altogether supernatural love. Yet I would say to all, If your heart is easily accessible to love, wherefore not seek that which is heavenly? and if you are naturally hard and stern, strive to make up for what is wanting to you in natural love by that supernatural affection which He Who calls you so lovingly to Him offers to you.

CHAPTER II.

We must have a continually growing Desire to love.

“**L**AY up for yourselves treasures in Heaven;” so says the Great Lover of souls.¹ Be not content with one treasure only, but heap up treasure upon treasure, be insatiable in seeking to add continually to your love. Wherefore is the bee perpetually storing up honey, but because it so greatly desires it? O my soul, thou wert created for His Love Who is Infinite, and what canst thou desire so much as that best of all loves? I have longed for Thy saving health, O Lord, and in Thy law is my delight.”²

The sick man has no appetite, but he fain would

¹ Matt. vi. 20.

² Ps. cxix. 174.

have it ; he has no desire for food, but longs for the desire. It is not given us to know whether indeed we love God above all else, but we do know whether we long to love Him ; and directly we are conscious of the wish to love, we may be sure that we are beginning to love Him. The animal, sensual part of man desires food, but it is his reason which desires an appetite for food ; and inasmuch as the two do not always work together, it sometimes happens that we desire the appetite without having it.

But the wish to love, and love itself, depend upon the will ; so that no sooner does any one heartily wish to love than he begins to do so, and as the wish gains strength so does the love. He who fervently desires to love will soon love fervently : "Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the poor ; Thou preparest their heart, and Thine Ear hearkeneth thereto."¹ He who does not certainly love God is poor ; but if desirous to love Him he is as a beggar, and verily a most privileged one, one of those of whom our Lord has said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven!"² Such was S. Augustine, crying out for more love and a nearer walk with God ; or S. Francis, desiring to die for love of Him Who died for very love ; or S. Catherine of Genoa and S. Teresa, dying of their great thirst for love. "Lord, give us this water!"³ The love of money, material avarice, is the root of all evil ; but spiritual avarice, the craving after supernatural treasure, is the root of all good. He who heartily desires love will seek it heartily ; he who seeks heartily will surely find ; and "he who findeth Me findeth life."⁴ May our unweary cry be—

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire."

¹ Ps. x. 19. ² Matt. v. 3. ³ John iv. 15. ⁴ Prov. viii. 35.

CHAPTER III.

**He who would long after God's Love must check
Worldly Longings.**

WE are told that hounds are more apt to lose the scent in spring than at any other time, and this is said by the huntsmen to be because all vegetation is then in such vigour that it baffles the dogs' scent of their game. And surely those souls which teem with every conceivable earthly longing, plan, and aim, can never effectually seize the scent or track of their Beloved, Who is described as being "like a roe or a young hart."¹

Men say that the lily flowers according to the depth at which it is planted. If the roots be but a few inches deep in the soil it will flower early; if they be deeper down it will be proportionably later. So the heart which is immersed in worldly cares and hopes will be tardy in bringing forth the bloom of Heavenly Love; but if it hold on lightly, and no more than is absolutely needful to temporal things, it will soon put forth its fragrant blossoms. It was this consciousness, and the desire to lay aside secular cares for heavenly, which drove saints of old into the wilderness. Souls which heartily desire to love God will close their mind as far as possible to earthly claims, the better to devote it to meditation on heavenly things, concentrating all their powers on their single aim, *i.e.* the love of God. He who desires anything whatsoever without any reference to God loves God so much the less.

S. Egidius was asked by a religious how he could best please God. His answer was, "Give all to All," *i.e.* the whole soul to the One Only God. A profusion of longings and aspirations in one heart resembles

¹ Cant. ii. 9.

several children striving to suck from one breast, pushing one another aside, and drying up the source. He who aims at the attainment of God's Love must needs confine all his heart, mind, and energy for that single aim.

CHAPTER IV.

Our Lawful Callings in nowise hinder the Exercise of Divine Love.

CURIOSITY, ambition, and restlessness, combined with want of due consideration of the object for which we are sent into the world, often turn our duties into hindrances, our work into mere anxious worry, so that there is more bustle than result. It is by means of these foolish, unimportant matters that we are often distracted from steady perseverance in the love of God, not by the exercise of our real lawful vocations. Think how David (and S. Louis treading in his steps), amid perils and toils, in peace and war, ceased not to cry out, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."¹ And S. Bernard, while serving God in the complicated affairs of state, both in camp and court, never ceased to advance in His Holy Love. Truly, he changed scenes, but he never changed his heart, nor his heart its love, nor his love its aim; rather, as he himself has said, all vicissitudes were around, but not of him, and however his surroundings might alter he altered not, but remained stedfastly united to his God.²

Wise men have said that holiness cannot haunt court and camp, and the Israelites cried out, "How

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 24.

² "Celuy fuye la cour et quitte le palais
Qui veut vivre devot : rarement es armées
On voit de pieté les ames animées ;
La foy, la sainteté, sont filles de la paix."

shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" But they were not merely dwelling in Babylon, they were its captives ; and verily, he who is a slave to court favour, success, or fame, has little claim to sing "the Lord's song." But he who is found in court, camp, or palace merely in the course of duty will be kept of God, and the antidote to worldly allurements will never be wanting to him.

During the great plague which devastated Milan S. Charles Borromeo went freely among the infected places and people ; but he only went whither duty and God's service called him, esteeming it wrong to tempt God's Providence by going into danger where he had no call, and thus he was kept from harm, his loving trust, alike free from presumption and timidity, being blessed of God. And in like manner be sure God will protect those whose duty takes them into scenes of temptation and danger ; nor is it right either to shrink back from pursuing a lawful calling which takes a man into such, any more than to rush presumptuously into dangers when duty or necessity do not require a man to do so.

CHAPTER V.

An Illustration of this Principle.

"**W**ITH the holy Thou shalt be holy." God's Gracious Love often seems to deal with even more than a mother's tenderness towards those who give themselves up, childlike, to Him.

We are told that S. Frances, while reciting the Daily Office, was one day called repeatedly away from her Oratory just as she was beginning a Psalm, going calmly each time to the domestic duty which summoned her, and returning to resume her devotions ; until at last, coming to her book, she found the verse which she had

¹ Ps. xviii. 25.

so often interrupted out of obedience traced in golden letters by an angel's hand.

No surely, the rightful duties of a Christian's calling need never hinder, but should rather augment his love of God, feeding, and so to say gilding, his devotion. The nightingale pauses amid its floods of song, and the loving heart does not let go its hold of God when external duties claim its heed, any more than when absorbed in the visible act of prayer; song and silence, labour and rest, alike bear up to Heaven its notes of praise and adoration.

CHAPTER VI.

It is important to avail Ourselves of the Present Moment to advance in Divine Love.

THERE are certain persons who are for ever full of mighty projects for the future, in which they intend to serve God in eminent and extraordinary ways; but all these great things are in the future, and will probably never take any present shape, they the while deluding themselves with a belief that their love is very great. Yet such people, while enlarging on heavy future crosses, are prone to shun the lesser ones which God sets before them. Surely it is a mere temptation to be so brave in imagination and so cowardly in deed!

God shield us from such empty boastings, which only foster a miserable self-conceit! Great things do not often cross our path, but there is no time in which we may not do little things as perfectly as possible, *i.e.* in the spirit of love. He who gives a "cup of cold water" to his thirsty brother does a seemingly trifling act, but the intention and love which excite that act are such as to win a reward of eternal life.¹

Bees gather honey from thyme and rosemary no

¹ Matt. x. 42.

less than from the more showy garden flowers, and the honey sucked from these fragrant herbs is even sweeter than the other. So true love finds a purer, as well as a more frequent, opportunity of testifying itself in little things than in great.

The kindly forbearance towards another, the trifling victory over temper and passion, the self-denial in some little matter, the resistance to a dislike, the honest acknowledgment of a fault, the effort to be calm and even-tempered, the willingly accepted humiliation and censure,—all these things, be sure, are a more precious harvest than we are wont to think, provided they be wrought for the love of God.

CHAPTER VII.

Every Act should be done as perfectly as possible.

OUR Lord frequently uses the metaphor of coin, *e.g.* the talent put out to usury, the piece of silver lost and found. Unless a coin be good, and of full weight, it will not pass current; and if a deed be not genuine, springing from love and a right intention, it will not be reckoned as good. If I fast out of mere avarice my fasting is vain; if from temperance, yet meanwhile being guilty of some mortal sin, the work is wanting, for love alone can give due weight to anything we do. If my motive is merely compliance with those around me my deed wants the true stamp. But if I fast out of temperance, intending thereby to please God, my coin will have a true ring, and will be laid up as a treasure in store.

Little actions are well done when we do them with a pure intention and a steadfast will to please God, and then they greatly promote our sanctification. Some men eat heartily, yet are always thin and weakly, because they do not digest their food properly; while others who eat less are hearty and strong, because

their digestion is good. So certain people perform numerous good works without growing proportionately in love, because they are cold and apathetic instead of earnest and devout, while others seem to achieve but little, yet that little is done in so fervent a spirit that they grow rapidly in grace, and God seems visibly to bless their increase.

CHAPTER VIII.

How to turn all our Actions to God's Service.

"**W**HATSOEVER ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ;"¹ "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God."² And these precepts we fulfil (so says S. Thomas) when the love of God has become our habit of mind ; so that although we may not make a special act of intention to serve God in each passing act, it is nevertheless always understood, and maintained by our habitual union and communion with God, through which all we do is, like ourselves, consecrated to His Eternal Love. The child dwelling in its parents' house needs not to be perpetually affirming that all he earns is his father's ; inasmuch as he belongs to his father, all that is his does the same. Children of God's Love as we are, all we do is inherently devoted to His Glory.

As I said before, the olive-tree imparts its flavour to the neighbouring vine, and so love imparts its perfectness to all other virtues. But if we graft the vine upon the olive it not merely acquires a flavour, but imbibes its very juices. So be you not content merely to possess love together with other graces, but aim at possessing and practising every virtue of grace in and through love.

When the master guides his pupil's hand as he

¹ Col. iii. 23.

² 1 Cor. x. 31.

paints the picture is mainly his, albeit the pupil has consented and co-operated in the work; and verily our deeds are excellent above all when they are altogether prompted by motives of love. But this happens variously, according to the man. Thus Divine Love sheds a very special grace upon the good deeds of those who are specially consecrated to Him. Such are Bishops and Priests, who are sealed and stamped as God's servants by a sacramental, ineffaceable dedication; such are religious, whose vows have made them an "acceptable living sacrifice unto God,"¹ and such in their measure are all who devote themselves wholly to God's Will in retreats and spiritual exercises.

Some have held that this kind of general self-oblation does not affect subsequent actions unless individually offered; but all will accept S. Bonaventura's illustration, namely, that if a man offers a hundred crowns deliberately to God it is a real offering of love, albeit the actual distribution be made subject to distraction from the definite point. And if so, where is the difference between the offering of money or of all our actions? or why should not the wholesale deliberate offering be regarded alike in both cases? He who has wholly surrendered himself to God has virtually dedicated his every action.

This consideration might well make all resolve at least once to make a retreat, in which to purify their soul and offer it deliberately and stedfastly to God,² afterwards making a general review of conscience at least once a year, renewing the resolutions which were then formed.

S. Bonaventura says that a man may acquire so confirmed a habit and intention of well-doing that he often does it without special intention, such well-doing being highly meritorious notwithstanding, because the habit which prompts it is rooted and grown in a confirmed and stedfast love.

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

² See the "Devout Life."

CHAPTER IX.

Further Means of working all things for God.

IT is said that the peacock's young grow white if the hen hatches in a clean place ; and verily, all man's actions acquire character and grace from the love whence they issue. It is obvious that those actions which promote a man's calling, or are needful to his plans, will depend upon his original choice.

But we must not stop here. A really thorough progress in devotion demands, not merely a good beginning annually renewed, but a daily offering, by means of which fresh vigour and grace are continually won, and the heart is sanctified anew. And beyond this, all through each day a thousand ejaculatory prayers and upliftings of the heart should bear it onwards towards God, and with it all we do. He who thus ever strives to keep his heart stayed in the Bosom of his Heavenly Father cannot fail to do all things in and for God.

"I am Thine, O save me!"¹ "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."² "My God, my Life, my All ! Grant me to die to self, and live to Thee only !" Thrice blessed is the soul which thus perpetually dedicates itself to its Heavenly Bridegroom, thereby renewing its original determination to have and know and love nothing save God and His Love. And such continual aspirations tend greatly to quicken love, especially in ordinary daily life.

On great occasions lift up your heart and mind to God, stretching out to thoughts of Eternity, dwelling upon His Goodness Who has so cherished you, provided you with all things needful to salvation, and enabled you to seek good and flee evil. And then accept, embrace heartily, whatsoever He sends in obedience to His Will, be it a blessing to enjoy or a trial to endure.

¹ Ps. cxix. 94.

² Cant. ii. 17.

When the plague came upon his diocese S. Charles stedfastly realised that the calamity was sent by God, as well as the power to minister and relieve the flock which was intrusted to himself. And so, well weighing the greatness of his undertaking, he offered himself to God, and kissing the Cross, exclaimed like S. Andrew, "All hail, O precious cross! Welcome trial, which comes from my Father's Hand, Who has so willed it from all eternity for my people and for me! I accept thee gladly, O cross, since my God sends it!"

Thus we may boldly go forth to meet the weightiest matters or the heaviest trials; and if they last long we must needs often renew the practice, thereby strengthening our union to God's Good Pleasure, saying, in His Dear Son's words, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy Sight."

CHAPTER X.

The Grace of a Voluntary Sacrifice.

OF all examples of strong, loyal love, none can equal Abraham, who first sacrificed his natural cleavings when bidden, "get thee out of Thy country and from Thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."¹ He went out "not knowing whither he went,"² ready to quit all earthly affections at God's call. But this was light compared with his after obedience, when God called upon him to offer up his only son, the child of promise, and he, meekly journeying forth, built the altar, and raised his hand to slay Isaac, only hindered from completing the offering by the angel's interposition.

Our Lord has said that he who lusts after a woman has committed adultery already in his heart; and surely he who binds his son upon the altar has already

¹ Gen. xii. 1.

² Heb. xii. 8.

offered the sacrifice! One scarce knows whether most to admire the father in his heroic obedience, or the son in his lamb-like submission to the decree. Perhaps Abraham's fortitude and Isaac's generosity are alike marvellous; yet the father was long trained in obedience, and strengthened by visions of the Almighty, while the son was yet tender in his youth, and saw God's Will in his father's word. Who but would dwell in wonder on the three days' journey with that fearful end awaiting the travellers? or on the son's simple question, "My father, where is the lamb for an offering?" and the father's reply, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb"? When shall we learn thus absolutely to offer up that only child of our spiritual life, our free-will? When shall we be able to bind and lay it on the altar, ready to take its death-blow for love of Christ?

Be sure that our free-will is never so free as when it becomes the slave of Christ, never so enslaved as when it is the minister of self. Its true life is death to self, its living death is self-seeking.

We have freedom to do good or evil, but when we choose evil we do not use but abuse our liberty. Let us renounce such a mistaken freedom and give it up to Divine Love, and voluntarily become love's slaves, therein more blessed than kings. And if ever our heart craves to use its liberty in opposition to our resolution to serve God unreservedly, be it ours at once to sacrifice that free-will, and, dying to self, live to God. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My Sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it,"¹ here and hereafter. Whoso seeks his freedom in this world shall inherit slavery in the life to come; but whosoever accepts the cross here willingly, will find his liberty turned to love, his love to liberty and joy without limit, and be plunged for ever into the fathomless abyss of God's Gladness and Love.

¹ Mark viii. 35.

